THE RHYMES OF A RED-CROSS MAN

Robert W. Service

P. 25

PRESENTED

IN MEMORY OF

MAUDE W. FRAZAR

BY

E. W. FRAZAR, Esq.

The

Rhymes of a Red-Cross Man

THE POEMS OF

ROBERT W. SERVICE

("THE CANADIAN KIPLING")

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The Rhymes of a Red-Cross Man

By

Robert W. Service

Author of "Songs of a Sourdough," "Ballads of a Cheechako," "Rhymes of a Rolling Stone," etc.

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To the Memory of

MY BROTHER

LIEUTENANT ALBERT SERVICE

CANADIAN INFANTRY

KILLED IN ACTION, FRANCE

August, 1916

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FOREWORD

I've tinkered at my bits of rhymes
In weary, woeful, waiting times;
In doleful hours of battle-din,
Ere yet they brought the wounded in;
Through vigils of the fateful night,
In lousy barns by candle-light;
In dug-outs, sagging and aflood,
On stretchers stiff and bleared with blood;
By ragged grove, by ruined road,
By hearths accurst where Love abode;
By broken altars, blackened shrines
I've tinkered at my bits of rhymes.

I've solaced me with scraps of song
The desolated ways along:
Through sickly fields all shrapnel-sown,
And meadows reaped by death alone;
By blazing cross and splintered spire,
By headless Virgin in the mire;
By gardens gashed amid their bloom,
By gutted grave, by shattered tomb;

Beside the dying and the dead
Where rocket green and rocket red
In trembling pools of poising light
With flowers of flame festoon the night.
Ah me! by what dark ways of wrong
I've cheered my heart with scraps of song.

So here's my sheaf of war-won verse,
And some is bad, and some is worse.
And if at times I curse a bit,
You needn't read that part of it;
For through it all like horror runs
The red resentment of the guns.
And you yourself would mutter when
You took the things that once were men,
And sped them through that zone of hate
To where the dripping surgeons wait;
And wonder too if in God's sight
War ever, ever can be right.

Yet may it not be, crime and war
But effort misdirected are?
And if there's good in war and crime,
There may be in my bits of rhyme,
My songs from out the slaughter mill:
So take or leave them as you will.

THE CALL

(France, August First, 1914).

Far and near, high and clear,
Hark to the call of War!
Over the gorse and the golden dells,
Ringing and swinging of clamorous bells,
Praying and saying of wild farewells:
War! War! War!

High and low, all must go:
Hark to the shout of War!
Leave to the women the harvest yield;
Gird ye, men, for the sinister field:
A sabre instead of a scythe to wield:
War! Red War!

Rich and poor, lord and boor,
Hark to the blast of War!
Tinker and tailor and millionaire,
Actor in triumph and priest in prayer,
Comrades now in the hell out there,
Sweep to the fire of War!

Prince and page, sot and sage,
Hark to the roar of War!
Poet, professor and circus clown,
Chimney-sweeper and fop o' the town,
Into the pot and be melted down:
Into the pot of War!

Women all, hear the call,
The pitiless call of War!
Look your last on your dearest ones,
Brothers and husbands, fathers, sons:
Swift they go to the ravenous guns,
The gluttonous guns of War.

Everywhere thrill the air
The maniac bells of War.
There will be little of sleeping to-night;
There will be wailing and weeping to-night;
Death's red sickle is reaping to-night:
War! War! War!

"But it isn't playing the game," he said,
And he slammed his books away;
"The Latin and Greek I've got in my head
Will do for a duller day."
"Rubbish!" I cried; "the bugle's call
Isn't for lads from school."
D'ye think he'd listen? Oh, not at all:
So I called him a fool, a fool.

Now there's his dog by his empty bed,
And the flute he used to play,
And his favourite bat . . . but Dick he's dead,
Somewhere in France, they say:
Dick with his rapture of song and sun,
Dick of the yellow hair,
Dicky whose life had but begun,
Carrion-cold out there.

Look at his prizes all in a row
Surely a hint of fame.
Now he's finished with, nothing to show:
Doesn't it seem a shame?
Look from the window! All you see
Was to be his one day:
Forest and furrow, lawn and lea,
And he goes and chucks it away.

Chucks it away to die in the dark.
Somebody saw him fall,
Part of him mud, part of him blood,
The rest of him—not at all.
And yet I'll bet he was never afraid,
And he went as the best of 'em go,
For his hand was clenched on his broken blade,
And his face was turned to the foe.

And I called him a fool . . . Oh, blind was I!
And the cup of my grief's abrim.
Will Glory o' England ever die
So long as we've lads like him?
So long as we've fond and fearless fools,
Who, spurning fortune and fame,
Turn out with the rallying cry of their schools,
Just bent on playing the game.

A fool! Ah no! He was more than wise.
His was the proudest part.
He died with the glory of faith in his eyes,
And the glory of love in his heart.
And though there's never a grave to tell,
Nor a cross to mark his fall,
Thank God! we know that he "batted well"
In the last great Game of all.

THE VOLUNTEER

Sez I: My Country calls? Well, let it call.
I grins perlitely and declines with thanks.
Go, let 'em plaster every blighted wall,
'Ere's *one* they don't stampede into the ranks.
Them politicians with their greasy ways;
Them empire-grabbers—fight for 'em? No fear!
I've seen this mess a-comin' from the days
Of Algyserious and Aggydear:
I've felt me passion rise and swell,
But . . . wot the 'ell, Bill? Wot the 'ell?

Sez I: My Country? Mine? I likes their cheek.
Me mud-bespattered by the cars they drive,
Wot makes my measly thirty bob a week,
And sweats red blood to keep meself alive!
Fight for the right to slave that they may spend,
Them in their mansions, me 'ere in my slum?
No, let 'em fight wot's something to defend:
But me, I've nothin',—let the Kaiser come.
And so I cusses 'ard and well,
But . . . wot the 'ell, Bill? Wot the 'ell?

Sez I: If they would do the decent thing,
And shield the missis and the little 'uns,
Why, even *I* might shout God save the King,
And face the chances of them 'ungry guns.

But we've got three, another on the way;
It's that wot makes me snarl and set me jor:
The wife and nippers wot of 'em, I say,
If I gets knocked out in this blasted war?
Gets proper busted by a shell,
But . . . wot the 'ell, Bill? Wot the 'ell?

Ay, wot the 'ell's the use of all this talk?
To-day some boys in blue was passin' me,
And some of 'em they 'ad no legs to walk,
And some of 'em they 'ad no eyes to see.
And—well, I couldn't look 'em in the face,
And so I'm goin', goin' to declare
I'm under forty-one and take me place
To face the music with the bunch out there.
A fool, you say! Maybe you're right.
I'll 'ave no peace unless I fight.
I've ceased to think; I only know
I've gotta go, Bill, gotta go.

THE CONVALESCENT

. . . So I walked among the willows very quietly all night;
There was no moon at all, at all; no timid star alight;
There was no light at all, at all; I wint from tree to tree,
And I called him as his mother called, but he nivver answered me.

Oh I called him all the night-time, as I walked the wood alone;
And I listened and I listened, but I nivver heard a moan;
Then I found him at the dawnin', when the sorry sky was red:
I was lookin' for the livin', but I only found the dead.

Sure I know that it was Shamus by the silver cross he wore;
But the bugles they were callin', and I heard the cannon roar.
Oh I had no time to tarry, so I said a little prayer,
And I clasped his hands together, and I left him lyin' there.

Now the birds are singin', singin', and I'm home
in Donegal,
And it's Springtime, and I'm thinkin' that I only
dreamed it all;
I dreamed about that evil wood, all crowded with
its dead,
Where I knelt beside me brother when the battle-
dawn was red.

Where I prayed beside me brother ere I wint to
fight anew:
Such dreams as these are evil dreams; I can't
believe it's true.
Where all is love and laughter, sure it's hard to
think of loss. . . .
But mother's sayin' nothin', and she clasps—*a
silver cross.*

THE MAN FROM ATHABASKA

Oh the wife she tried to tell me that 'twas nothing
but the thrumming
Of a wood-pecker a-rapping on the hollow of a tree;
And she thought that I was fooling when I said it
was the drumming
Of the mustering of legions, and 'twas calling
unto me;
'Twas calling me to pull my freight and hop across
the sea.

And a-mending of my fish-nets sure I started up in
wonder,
For I heard a savage roaring and 'twas coming
from afar;
Oh the wife she tried to tell me that 'twas only
summer thunder,
And she laughed a bit sarcastic when I told her it
was War;
'Twas the chariots of battle where the mighty
armies are.

Then down the lake came Half-breed Tom with
russet sail a-flying,
And the word he said was "War" again, so what
was I to do?

Oh the dogs they took to howling, and the missis took to crying,
As I flung my silver foxes in the little birch canoe:
Yes, the old girl stood a-blubbing till an island hid the view.

Says the factor: "Mike, you're crazy! They have soldier men a-plenty.
You're as grizzled as a badger, and you've sixty year or so."
"But I haven't missed a scrap," says I, "since I was one and twenty.
And shall I miss the biggest? You can bet your whiskers—no!"
So I sold my furs and started . . . and that's eighteen months ago.

For I joined the Foreign Legion, and they put me for a starter
In the trenches of the Argonne with the Boche a step away;
And the partner on my right hand was an *apache* from Montmartre;
On my left there was a millionaire from Pittsburg, U.S.A.
(Poor fellow! They collected him in bits the other day.)

But I'm sprier than a chipmunk, save a touch of the lumbago,
And they calls me Old Methoosalah, and *blagues* me all the day.
I'm their exhibition sniper, and they work me like a Dago,
And laugh to see me plug a Boche a half a mile away.
Oh I hold the highest record in the regiment, they say.

And at night they gather round me, and I tell them of my roaming
In the Country of the Crepuscule beside the Frozen Sea;
Where the musk-ox runs unchallenged, and the cariboo goes homing,
And they sit like little children, just as quiet as can be:
Men of every crime and colour, how they harken unto me!

And I tell them of the Furland, of the tumpline and the paddle,
Of secret rivers loitering, that no one will explore;
And I tell them of the ranges, of the pack-strap and the saddle,
And they fill their pipes in silence, and their eyes beseech for more;
While above the star-shells fizzle and the high explosives roar.

And I tell of lakes fish-haunted, where the big bull moose are calling,
And forests still as sepulchres with never trail or track;
And valleys packed with purple gloom, and mountain peaks appalling,
And I tell them of my cabin on the shore at Fond du Lac;
And I find myself a-thinking: Sure I wish that I was back.

So I brag of bear and beaver while the batteries are roaring,
And the fellows on the firing steps are blazing at the foe;
And I yarn of fur and feather when the *marmites* are a-soaring,
And they listen to my stories, seven *poilus* in a row,
Seven lean and lousy *poilus* with their cigarettes aglow.

And I tell them when it's over how I'll hike for Athabaska,
And those seven greasy *poilus* they are crazy to go too.
And I'll give the wife the "pickle-tub" I promised, and I'll ask her
The price of mink and marten, and the run of cariboo,
And I'll get my traps in order, and I'll start to work anew.

For I've had my fill of fighting, and I've seen a nation scattered,
And an army swung to slaughter, and a river red with gore,
And a city all a-smoulder, and . . . as if it really mattered,
For the lake is yonder dreaming, and my cabin's on the shore;
And the dogs are leaping madly, and the wife is singing gladly,
And I'll rest in Athabaska, and I'll leave it nevermore.

THE RED RETREAT

Tramp, tramp, the grim road, the road from Mons to Wipers
(I've 'ammered out this ditty with me bruised and bleedin' feet);
Tramp, tramp, the dim road—we didn't 'ave no pipers,
And bellies that was 'oller was the drums we 'ad to beat.
Tramp, tramp, the bad road, the bits o' kiddies cryin' there,
The fell birds a-flyin' there, the 'ouses all aflame;
Tramp, tramp, the sad road, the pals I left a-lyin' there,
Red there, and dead there. . . . Oh blimy, it's a shame!

A-singin' "'Oo's Yer Lady Friend?" we started out from 'Arver,
A-singin' till our froats was dry—we didn't care a 'ang;
The Frenchies 'ow they lined the way, and slung us their palaver,
And all we knowed to arnser was the one word "vang";

They gave us booze and caporal, and cheered for
us like crazy,
And all the pretty gels was out to kiss us as we
passed;
And 'ow they all went dotty when we 'owled the
Marcelaisey!
Oh, Gawd! Them was the 'appy days, the days
too good to last.

We started out for God Knows Where, we started
out a-roarin';
We 'ollered: "'Ere We Are Again," and 'struth!
but we was dry.
The dust was gummin' up our ears, and 'ow the
sweat was pourin';
The road was long, the sun was like a brazier in
the sky,
We wondered where the 'Uns was—we wasn't long
a-wonderin',
For down a scruff of 'ill-side they rushes like a flood;
Then oh! 'twas music 'eavenly, our batteries a-
thunderin',
And arms and legs went soarin' in the fountain of
their blood.

For on they came like bee swarms, a-hochin' and
a-singin';
We pumped the bullets into 'em; we couldn't miss a
shot.
But though we mowed 'em down like grass, like
grass was they a-springin',

And all our 'ands was blistered, for our rifles was so 'ot.
We roared with battle-fury, and we lammed the stuffin' out of 'em,
And then we fixed our bay'nets and we spitted 'em like meat.
You should 'ave 'eard the beggars squeal; you should 'ave seen the rout of 'em,
And 'ow we cussed and wondered when the word came: "Retreat!"

Retreat! That was the 'ell of it. It fair upset our 'abits,
A-runnin' from them blighters over 'alf the roads of France;
A-scurryin' before 'em like a lot of blurry rabbits,
And knowin' we could smash 'em if we just 'ad 'alf a chance.
Retreat! That was the bitter bit, a-limpin' and a-blunderin';
All day and night a-hoofin' it and sleepin' on our feet;
A-fightin' rearguard actions for a bit of rest, and wonderin'
If sugar beets or mangels was the 'olesomest to eat.

Ho yus, there isn't many left that started out so cheerily;
There was no bands a-playin' and we 'ad no autmobeels.

Our tummies they was 'oller, and our 'eads was 'angin' wearily,
And if we stopped to light a fag the 'Uns was on our 'eels.
That rotten road! I can't forget the kids and mothers flyin' there,
The bits of barns a-blazin' and the 'orrid sights I sor;
The stiffs that lined the wayside, me own pals a-lyin' there,
Their faces covered over wiv a little 'eap of stror.

Tramp, tramp, the red road, the wicked bullets 'ummin'
(I've panted out this ditty with me 'ot 'ard breath).
Tramp, tramp, the dread road, the Boches all a-comin',
The lootin' and the shootin' and the shrieks o' death.
Tramp, tramp, the fell road, the mad 'orde pursuin' there,
And 'ow we 'urled it back again, them grim, grey waves;
Tramp, tramp, the 'ell road, the 'orror and the ruin there,
The graves of me mateys there, the grim, sour graves.

THE HAGGIS OF PRIVATE McPHEE

"Hae ye heard whit ma auld mither's postit tae me?
It fair maks me hamesick," says Private McPhee.
"And whit did she send ye?" says Private McPhun,
As he cockit his rifle and bleezed at a Hun.
"A haggis! A *haggis!*" says Private McPhee;
"The brawest big haggis I ever did see.
And think! It's the morn when fond memory turns
Tae haggis and whuskey—the Birthday o' Burns.
We maun find a dram; then we'll ca' in the rest
O' the lads, and we'll hae a Burns' Nicht wi' the best."

"Be ready at sundoon," snapped Sergeant McCole;
"I want you two men for the List'nin' Patrol."
Then Private McPhee looked at Private McPhun:
"I'm thinkin', ma lad, we're confoundedly done."
Then Private McPhun looked at Private McPhee:
"I'm thinkin', auld chap, it's a' aff wi' oor spree."
But up spoke their crony, wee Wullie McNair:
"Jist lea' yer braw haggis for me tae prepare;
And as for the dram, if I search the camp roun',
We maun hae a drappie tae jist haud it doon.
Sae rin, lads, and think, though the nicht it be black,
O' the haggis that's waitin' ye when ye get back."

My! but it wis waesome on Naebuddy's Land,
And the deid they were rottin' on every hand.
And the rockets like corpse candles hauntit the sky,
And the winds o' destruction went shudderin' by.
There wis skelpin' o' bullets and skirlin' o' shells,
And breengin' o' bombs and a thoosand death-knells;
But cooryin' doon in a Jack Johnson hole
Little fashed the twa men o' the List'nin' Patrol.
For sweeter than honey and bricht as a gem
Wis the thocht o' the haggis that waitit for them.

Yet alas! in oor moments o' sunniest cheer
Calamity's aften maist cruelly near.
And while the twa talked o' their puddin' divine
The Boches below them were howkin' a mine.
And while the twa cracked o' the feast they would hae,
The fuse it wis burnin' and burnin' away.
Then sudden a roar like the thunner o' doom,
A hell-leap o' flame . . . then the wheesht o' the tomb.

"Haw, Jock! Are ye hurtit?" says Private McPhun.
"Ay, Geordie, they've got me; I'm fearin' I'm done.
It's ma leg; I'm jist thinkin' it's aff at the knee;
Ye'd best gang and leave me," says Private McPhee.
"Oh leave ye I wunna," says Private McPhun;
"And leave ye I canna, for though I micht run,

It's no faur I wud gang, it's no muckle I'd see:
I'm blindit, and that's whit's the maitter wi' me."
Then Private McPhee sadly shakit his heid:
"If we bide here for lang, we'll be bidin' for deid.
And yet, Geordie lad, I could gang weel content
If I'd tasted that haggis ma auld mither sent."
"That's droll," says McPhun; "ye've jist speakit ma mind.
Oh I ken it's a terrible thing tae be blind;
And yet it's no' that that embitters ma lot—
It's missin' that braw muckle haggis ye've got."
For a while they were silent; then up once again
Spoke Private McPhee, though he whussilt wi' pain:
"And why should we miss it? Between you and me
We've legs for tae run, and we've eyes for tae see.
You lend me your shanks and I'll lend you ma sicht,
And we'll baith hae a kyte-fu' o' haggis the nicht."

Oh the sky it wis dourlike and dreepin' a wee,
When Private McPhun gruppit Private McPhee.
Oh the glaur it wis fylin' and crieshin' the grun',
When Private McPhee guidit Private McPhun.
"Keep clear o' them corpses—they're maybe no deid!
Haud on! There's a big muckle crater aheid.
Look oot! There's a sap; we'll be haein' a coup.
A staur-shell! For Godsake! Doun', lad, on yer daup.

Bear aff tae yer richt. . . . Aw yer jist daein' fine:
Before the nicht's feenished on haggis we'll dine."

There wis death and destruction on every hand;
There wis havoc and horror on Naebuddy's Land.
And the shells bickered doun wi' a crump and a glare,
And the hameless wee bullets were dingin' the air.
Yet on they went staggerin', cooryin' doun
When the stutter and cluck o' a Maxim crept roun'.
And the legs o' McPhun they were sturdy and stoot,
And McPhee on his back kept a bonnie look-oot.
"On, on, ma brave lad! We're no faur frae the goal;
I can hear the braw sweerin' o' Sergeant McCole."

But strength has its leemit, and Private McPhun,
Wi' a sab and a curse fell his length on the grun',
Then Private McPhee shoutit doon in his ear:
"Jist think o' the haggis! I smell it from here.
It's gushin' wi' juice, it's embaumin' the air;
It's steamin' for us, and we're—jist—aboot—there."
Then Private McPhee answers: "Dommit, auld chap!
For the sake o' that haggis I'll gang till I drap."
And he gets on his feet wi' a heave and a strain,
And onward he staggers in passion and pain.
And the flare and the glare and the fury increase,
Till you'd think they'd jist taken a' hell on a lease.

And on they go reelin' in peetifu' plight,
And someone is shoutin' away on their right;
And someone is runnin', and noo they can hear
A sound like a prayer and a sound like a cheer;
And swift through the crash and the flash and the din,
The lads o' the Hielands are bringin' them in.

"They're baith sairly woundit, but is it no' droll
Hoo they rave aboot haggis?" says Sergeant McCole.
When hirplin alang comes wee Wullie McNair,
And they a' wonnert why he wis greetin' sae sair.
And he says: "I'd jist liftit it oot o' the pot,
And there it lay steamin' and savoury hot,
When sudden I dooked at the fleech o' a shell,
And it *drapped on the haggis and dinged it tae hell.*"

And oh, but the lads were fair taken aback;
Then sudden the order wis passed tae attack,
And up from the trenches like lions they leapt,
And on through the nicht like a torrent they swept.
On, on, wi' their bayonets thirstin' before!
On, on tae the foe wi' a rush and a roar!
And wild to the welkin their battle-cry rang,
And doon on the Boches like tigers they sprang:
And there wisna a man but had death in his 'ee,
For he thocht o' the haggis o' Private McPhee.

THE LARK

From wrath-red dawn to wrath-red dawn,
The guns have brayed without abate;
And now the sick sun looks upon
The bleared, blood-boltered fields of hate
As if it loathed to rise again.
How strange the hush! Yet sudden, hark!
From yon down-trodden gold of grain,
The leaping rapture of a lark.

A fusillade of melody,
That sprays us from yon trench of sky;
A new amazing enemy
We cannot silence though we try;
A battery on radiant wings,
That from yon gap of golden fleece
Hurls at us hopes of such strange things
As joy and home and love and peace.

Pure heart of song! do you not know
That we are making earth a hell?
Or is it that you try to show
Life still is joy and all is well?
Brave little wings! Ah, not in vain
You beat into that bit of blue:
Lo! we who pant in war's red rain
Lift shining eyes, see Heaven too.

THE ODYSSEY OF 'ERBERT 'IGGINS

Me and Ed and a stretcher
Out on the nootral ground.
(If there's one dead corpse, I'll betcher
There's a 'undred smellin' around.)
Me and Eddie O'Brian,
Both of the R.A.M.C.
"It's a 'ell of a night
For a soul to take flight,"
As Eddie remarks to me.
Me and Ed crawlin' 'omeward,
Thinkin' our job is done,
When sudden and clear,
Wot do we 'ear:
'Owl of a wounded 'Un.

"Got to take 'im," snaps Eddy;
"Got to take all we can.
'E may be a Germ
Wiv the 'eart of a worm,
But, blarst 'im! ain't 'e a man?"
So 'e sloshes out fixin' a dressin'

('E'd always a medical knack),
When that wounded 'Un
'E rolls to 'is gun,
And 'e plugs me pal in the back.

Now what would you do? I arst you.
There was me slaughtered mate.
There was that 'Un
(I'd collered 'is gun),
A-snarlin' 'is 'ymn of 'ate.
Wot did I do? 'Ere, whisper. . . .
'E'd a shiny bald top to 'is 'ead,
But when I got through,
Between me and you,
It was 'orrid and jaggy and red.

"'Ang on like a limpet, Eddy.
Thank Gord! you ain't dead after all."
It's slow and it's sure and it's steady
(Which is 'ard, for 'e's big and I'm small).
The rockets are shootin' and shinin',
It's rainin' a perishin' flood,
The bullets are buzzin' and whinin',
And I'm up to me stern in the mud.
There's all kinds of 'owlin' and 'ootin';
It's black as a bucket of tar;
Oh, I'm doin' my bit,
But I'm 'avin' a fit,
And I wish I was 'ome wiv Mar.

"Stick on like a plaster, Eddy.
Old sport, you're a-slakin' your grip."
Gord! But I'm crocky already;
My feet, 'ow they slither and slip!
There goes the biff of a bullet.
The Boches have got us for fair.
Another one—*Whut!*
The son of a slut!
'E managed to miss by a 'air.
'Ow! Wot was it jabbed at me shoulder?
Gave it a dooce of a wrench.
Is it Eddy or me
Wot's a-bleedin' so free?
Crust! but it's long to the trench.
I ain't just as strong as a Sandow,
And Ed ain't a flapper by far;
I'm blamed if I understand 'ow
We've managed to get where we are.
But 'ere's for a bit of a breather.
"Steady there, Ed, 'arf a mo'.
Old pal, it's all right;
It's a 'ell of a fight,
But are we down-'earted? No-o-o."

Now war is a funny thing, ain't it?
It's the rummiest sort of a go.
For when it's most real,
It's then that you feel
You're a-watchin' a cinema show.
'Ere's me wot's a barber's assistant.

Hey presto! It's somewheres in France,
And I'm 'ere in a pit
Where a coal-box 'as 'it,
And it's all like a giddy romance.
The ruddy quick-firers are spittin',
The 'eavies are bellowin' 'ate,
And 'ere I am cashooly sittin',
And 'oldin' the 'ead of me mate.
Them gharstly green star-shells is beamin',
'Ot shrapnel is poppin' like rain,
And I'm sayin': "Bert 'Iggins, you're
dreamin',
And you'll wake up in 'Ampstead again.
You'll wake up and 'ear yourself sayin':
'Would you like, sir, to 'ave a shampoo?'
'Stead of sheddin' yer blood
In the rain and the mud,
Which is some'ow the right thing to do;
Which is some'ow yer 'oary-eyed dooty,
Wot you're doin' the best wot you can,
For 'Ampstead and 'ome and beauty,
And you've been and you've slaughtered a
man,
A feller wot punctured your partner;
Oh, you 'ammered 'im 'ard on the 'ead,
And you still see 'is eyes
Starin' bang at the skies,
And you ain't even sorry 'e's dead.
But you wish you was back in your diggin's
Asleep on your mouldy old stror.

Oh, you're doin' yer bit, 'Erbert 'Iggins,
But you ain't just enjoyin' the war."

"'Ang on like a hoctopus, Eddy.
It's us for the bomb-belt again.
Except for the shrap
Which 'as 'it me a tap,
I'm feelin' as right as the rain.
It's my silly old feet wot are slippin',
It's as dark as a 'ogs'ead o' sin,
But don't be oneasy, my pippin,
I'm goin' to pilot you in.
It's my silly old 'ead wot is reelin'.
The bullets is buzzin' like bees.
Me shoulder's red-'ot,
And I'm bleedin' a lot,
And me legs is on'inged at the knees.
But we're staggerin' nearer and nearer.
Just stick it, old sport, play the game.
I make 'em out clearer and clearer,
Our trenches a-snappin' with flame.
Oh, we're stumblin' closer and closer.
'Ang on there, lad! Just one more try.
Did you say: Put you down? Damn it,
no, sir!
I'll carry you in if I die.
By cracky! old feller, they've seen us.
They're sendin' out stretchers for two.
Let's give 'em the hoorah between us
('Anged lucky we aren't booked through).

My flipper is mashed to a jelly.
A bullet 'as tickled your spleen.
We've shed lots of gore
And we're leakin' some more,
But—wot a hoccasion it's been?
Ho! 'Ere comes the rescuin' party.
They're crawlin' out cautious and slow.
Come! Buck up and greet 'em, my 'earty,
Shoulder to shoulder—so.
They mustn't think we was down-'earted.
Old pal, we was never down-'earted.
If they arsts us if we was down-'earted
We'll 'owl in their fyces: 'No-o-o.'"

A SONG OF WINTER WEATHER

It isn't the foe that we fear;
It isn't the bullets that whine;
It isn't the business career
Of a shell, or the bust of a mine;
It isn't the snipers who seek
To nip our young hopes in the bud:
No, it isn't the guns,
And it isn't the Huns—
It's the MUD,
MUD,
MUD.

It isn't the *mêlée* we mind.
That often is rather good fun.
It isn't the shrapnel we find
Obtrusive when rained by the ton;
It isn't the bounce of the bombs
That gives us a positive pain:
It's the strafing we get
When the weather is wet—
It's the RAIN,
RAIN,
RAIN.

It isn't because we lack grit
We shrink from the horrors of war.
We don't mind the battle a bit;
In fact that is what we are for;
It isn't the rum-jars and things
Make us wish we were back in the fold:
It's the fingers that freeze
In the boreal breeze—
It's the COLD,
COLD,
COLD,

Oh, the rain, the mud, and the cold,
The cold, the mud, and the rain;
With weather at zero it's hard for a hero
From language that's rude to refrain.
With porridgy muck to the knees,
With sky that's a-pouring a flood,
Sure the worst of our foes
Are the pains and the woes
Of the RAIN,
the COLD,
and the MUD.

TIPPERARY DAYS

Oh, weren't they the fine boys! You never saw
the beat of them,
Singing all together with their throats bronze-bare;
Fighting-fit and mirth-mad, music in the feet of
them,
Swinging on to glory and the wrath out there.
Laughing by and chaffing by, frolic in the smiles
of them,
On the road, the white road, all the afternoon;
Strangers in a strange land, miles and miles and
miles of them,
Battle-bound and heart-high, and singing this tune:

It's a long way to Tipperary,
It's a long way to go;
It's a long way to Tipperary,
And the sweetest girl I know.
Good-bye, Piccadilly,
Farewell, Leicester Square:
It's a long, long way to Tipperary,
But my heart's right there.

Come Yvonne and Juliette! Come Mimi and cheer for them!
Throw them flowers and kisses as they pass you by.
Aren't they the lovely lads! Haven't you a tear for them
Going out so gallantly to dare and die?
What is it they're singing so? Some high hymn of Motherland?
Some immortal chanson of their Faith and King?
Marseillaise or Brabançon, anthem of that other land,
Dears, let us remember it, that song they sing:

"C'est un chemin long 'to Tepararee,'
C'est un chemin long, c'est vrai;
C'est un chemin long 'to Tepararee,'
Et la belle fille qu'je connais;
Bonjour, Peekadeely!
Au revoir, Lestaire Squaire!
C'est un chemin long 'to Tepararee,'
Mais mon cœur 'ees zaire.'"

The gallant old "Contemptibles"! There isn't much remains of them,
So full of fun and fitness, and a-singing in their pride;
For some are cold as clabber and the corby picks the brains of them,
And some are back in Blighty, and a-wishing they had died.

Ah me! It seems but yesterday, that great, glad sight of them,
Swinging on to battle as the sky grew black and black;
Yet oh their glee and glory, and the great, grim fight of them!—
Just whistle Tipperary and it all comes back:

It's a long way to Tipperary
(Which means "'ome" anywhere);
It's a long way to Tipperary
(And the things wot make you care).
Good-bye, Piccadilly
('Ow I 'opes my folks is well);
It's a long, long way to Tipperary—
('R! Ain't War just 'ell?)

FLEURETTE

(*The Wounded Canadian Speaks*)

My leg? It's off at the knee.
Do I miss it? Well, some. You see
I've had it since I was born;
And lately a devilish corn.
(I rather chuckle with glee
To think how I've fooled that corn.)

But I'll hobble around all right.
It isn't that, it's my face.
Oh I know I'm a hideous sight,
Hardly a thing in place;
Sort of gargoyle, you'd say;
Nurse won't give me a glass,
But I see the folks as they pass
Shudder and turn away;
Turn away in distress . . .
Mirror enough I guess.

I'm gay! You bet I *am* gay;
But I wasn't a while ago.
If you'd seen me even to-day,
The darndest picture of woe,

With this Caliban mug of mine,
So ravaged and raw and red,
Turned to the wall—in fine,
Wishing that I was dead. . . .
What has happened since then,
Since I lay with my face to the wall,
The most despairing of men?
Listen! I'll tell you all.

That *poilu* across the way,
With the shrapnel wound in his head,
Has a sister: she came to-day
To sit awhile by his bed.
All morning I heard him fret:
"Oh, when will she come, Fleurette?"

Then sudden, a joyous cry;
The tripping of little feet;
The softest, tenderest sigh;
A voice so fresh and sweet;
Clear as a silver bell,
Fresh as the morning dews:
"C'est toi, c'est toi, Marcel!
Mon frère, comme je suis heureuse!"

So over the blanket's rim
I raised my terrible face,
And I saw—how I envied him!
A girl of such delicate grace;

Sixteen, all laughter and love;
As gay as a linnet, and yet
As tenderly sweet as a dove;
Half woman, half child—Fleurette.

Then I turned to the wall again.
(I was awfully blue, you see.)
And I thought with a bitter pain:
"Such visions are not for me."
So there like a log I lay,
All hidden, I thought, from view,
When sudden I heard her say:
"Ah! Who is that *malheureux?*"
Then briefly I heard him tell
(However he came to know)
How I'd smothered a bomb that fell
Into the trench, and so
None of my men were hit,
Though it busted me up a bit.

Well, I didn't quiver an eye,
And he chattered and there she sat;
And I fancied I heard her sigh—
Though I wouldn't just swear to that.
And maybe she wasn't so bright,
Though she talked in a merry strain,
And I closed my eyes ever so tight,
Yet I saw her ever so plain:

Her dear little tilted nose,
Her delicate dimpled chin,
Her mouth like a budding rose,
And the glistening pearls within;
Her eyes like the violet:
Such a rare little queen—Fleurette.

And at last when she rose to go,
The light was a little dim,
And I ventured to peep, and so
I saw her, graceful and slim,
And she kissed him and kissed him, and oh
How I envied and envied him!

So when she was gone I said
In rather a dreary voice
To him of the opposite bed:
"Ah, friend, how you must rejoice!
But me, I'm a thing of dread.
For me nevermore the bliss,
The thrill of a woman's kiss."

Then I stopped, for lo! she was there,
And a great light shone in her eyes.
And me! I could only stare,
I was taken so by surprise,
When gently she bent her head:
"*May I kiss you, Sergeant?*" she said.

Then she kissed my burning lips
With her mouth like a scented flower,
And I thrilled to the finger-tips,
And I hadn't even the power
To say: "God bless you, dear!"
And I felt such a precious tear
Fall on my withered cheek,
And darn it! I couldn't speak.

And so she went sadly away,
And I knew that my eyes were wet.
Ah, not to my dying day
Will I forget, forget!
Can you wonder now I am gay?
God bless her, that little Fleurette!

FUNK

When your marrer bone seems 'oller,
And you're glad you ain't no taller,
And you're all a-shakin' like you 'ad the chills;
When your skin creeps like a pullet's,
And you're duckin' all the bullets,
And you're green as gorgonzola round the gills;
When your legs seem made of jelly,
And you're squeamish in the belly,
And you want to turn about and do a bunk:]
For Gawd's sake, kid, don't show it!
Don't let your mateys know it—
You're just sufferin' from funk, funk, funk.

Of course there's no denyin'
That it ain't so easy tryin'
To grin and grip your rifle by the butt,
When the 'ole world rips asunder,
And you sees yer pal go under,
As a bunch of shrapnel sprays 'im on the nut;
I admit it's 'ard contrivin',
When you 'ears the shells arrivin',
To discover you're a bloomin' bit o' spunk;
But, my lad, you've got to do it,
And your God will see you through it,
For wot 'E 'ates is funk, funk, funk.

So stand up, son; look gritty,
And just 'um a lively ditty,
And only be afraid to be afraid;
Just 'old yer rifle steady,
And 'ave yer bay'nit ready,
For that's the way good soldier-men is made.
And if you 'as to die,
As it sometimes 'appens, why,
Far better die a 'ero than a skunk;
A-doin' of yer bit,
And so—to 'ell with it,
There ain't no bloomin' funk, funk, funk.

OUR HERO

"Flowers, only flowers—bring me dainty posies,
Blossoms for forgetfulness," that was all he said;
So we sacked our gardens, violets and roses,
Lilies white and bluebells laid we on his bed.
Soft his pale hands touched them, tenderly caressing;
Soft into his tired eyes came a little light;
Such a wistful love-look, gentle as a blessing;
There amid the flowers waited he the night.

"I would have you raise me; I can see the West then:
I would see the sun set once before I go."
So he lay a-gazing, seemed to be at rest then,
Quiet as a spirit in the golden glow.
So he lay a-watching rosy castles crumbling,
Moats of blinding amber, bastions of flame,
Rugged rifts of opal, crimson turrets tumbling;
So he lay a-dreaming till the shadows came.

"Open wide the window; there's a lark a-singing;
There's a glad lark singing in the evening sky.
How it's wild with rapture, radiantly winging:
Oh it's good to hear that when one has to die.
I am horror-haunted from the hell they found me;
I am battle-broken, all I want is rest.
Ah! It's good to die so, blossoms all around me,
And a kind lark singing in the golden West."

"Flowers, song and sunshine, just one thing is
wanting,
Just the happy laughter of a little child."
So we brought our dearest, Doris all-enchanting;
Tenderly he kissed her; radiant he smiled.
"In the golden peace-time you will tell the story
How for you and yours, sweet, bitter deaths were
ours. . . .
God bless little children!" So he passed to glory,
So we left him sleeping, still amid the flow'rs.

MY MATE

I've been sittin' starin', starin' at 'is muddy pair of boots,
And tryin' to convince meself it's 'im.
(Look out there, lad! That sniper—'e's a dysey when 'e shoots;
'E'll be layin' of you out the same as Jim.)
Jim as lies there in the dug-out wiv 'is blanket round 'is 'ead,
To keep 'is brains from mixin' wiv the mud;
And 'is face as white as putty, and his overcoat all red,
Like 'e's spilt a bloomin' paint-pot—but it's blood.

And I'm tryin' to remember of a time we wasn't pals.
'Ow often we've played 'ookey, 'im and me;
And sometimes it was music-'alls, and sometimes it was gals,
And even there we 'ad no disagree.
For when 'e copped Maria Jones, the one I liked the best,
I shook 'is 'and and loaned 'im 'arf a quid;
I saw 'im through the parson's job, I 'elped 'im make 'is nest,
I even stood god-farther to the kid.

So when the war broke out, sez 'e: "Well, wot abaht it, Joe?"
"Well, wot abaht it, lad?" sez I to 'im.
'Is missis made a awful fuss, but 'e was mad to go
('E always was 'igh-sperrited was Jim).
Well, none of it's been 'eaven, and the most of it's been 'ell,
But we've shared our baccy, and we've 'alved our bread.
We'd all the luck at Wipers, and we shaved through Noove Chapelle,
And . . . that snipin' barstard gits 'im on the 'ead.

Now wot I wants to know is, why it wasn't me was took?
I've only got meself, 'e stands for three.
I'm plainer than a louse, while 'e was 'andsome as a dook;
'E always *was* a better man than me.
'E was goin' 'ome next Toosday; 'e was 'appy as a lark,
And 'e'd just received a letter from 'is kid;
And 'e struck a match to show me, as we stood there in the dark,
When . . . that bleedin' bullet got 'im on the lid.

'E was killed so awful sudden that 'e 'adn't time to die.
'E sorto jumped, and came down wiv a thud.

Them corpsy-lookin' star-shells kept a-streamin' in
the sky,
And there 'e lay like nothin' in the mud.
And there 'e lay so quiet wiv no mansard to 'is 'ead,
And I'm sick, and blamed if I can understand:
The pots of 'alf and 'alf we've 'ad, and *zip!* like
that—'e's dead,
Wiv the letter of 'is nipper in 'is 'and.

There's some as fights for freedom and there's
some as fights for fun,
But me, my lad, I fights for bleedin' 'ate.
You can blame the war and blast it, but I 'opes it
won't be done
Till I gets the bloomin' blood-price for me mate.
It'll take a bit o' bayonet to level up for Jim;
Then if I'm spared I think I'll 'ave a bid
Wiv 'er that was Mariar Jones to take the place
of 'im,
To sorter be a farther to 'is kid.

MILKING TIME

THERE's a drip of honeysuckle in the deep green lane;
There's old Martin jogging homeward on his worn old wain;
There are cherry petals falling, and a cuckoo calling, calling,
And a score of larks (God bless 'em) . . . but it's all pain, pain.
For you see I am not really there at all, not at all;
For you see I'm in the trenches where the crump-crumps fall;
And the bits o' shells are screaming and it's only blessed dreaming
That in fancy I am seeming back in old Saint Pol.

Oh I've thought of it so often since I've come down here;
And I never dreamt that any place could be so dear;
The silvered whinstone houses, and the rosy men in blouses,
And the kindly, white-capped women with their eyes spring-clear.

And mother's sitting knitting where her roses climb,
And the angelus is calling with a soft, soft chime,
And the sea-wind comes caressing, and the light's a golden blessing,
And Yvonne, Yvonne is guessing that it's milking time.

Oh it's Sunday, for she's wearing of her 'broidered gown;
And she draws the pasture pickets and the cows come down;
And their feet are powdered yellow, and their voices honey-mellow,
And they bring a scent of clover, and their eyes are brown.
And Yvonne is dreaming after, but her eyes are blue;
And her lips are made for laughter, and her white teeth too;
And her mouth is like a cherry, and a dimple mocking merry
Is lurking in the very cheek she turns to you.

So I walk beside her kindly, and she laughs at me;
And I heap her arms with lilac from the lilac tree;
And a golden light is welling, and a golden peace is dwelling,
And a thousand birds are telling how it's good to be.

And what are pouting lips for if they can't be kissed?
And I've filled her arms with blossom so she can't resist;
And the cows are sadly straying, and her mother must be saying
That Yvonne is long delaying . . . *God! How close that missed!*

A nice polite reminder that the Boche are nigh;
That we're here to fight like devils, and if need be die;
That from kissing pretty wenches to the frantic firing-benches
Of the battered, tattered trenches is a far, far cry.
Yet still I'm sitting dreaming in the glare and grime;
And once again I'm hearing of them church-bells chime;
And how I wonder whether in the golden summer weather
We will fetch the cows together when it's milking time! . . .

English voice, months later:

"*Ow, Bill! A rottin' Frenchy. Whew! 'E ain't 'arf prime. . . .*"

YOUNG FELLOW MY LAD

"WHERE are you going, Young Fellow My Lad,
On this glittering morn of May?"
"I'm going to join the Colours, Dad;
They're looking for men, they say."
"But you're only a boy, Young Fellow My Lad;
You aren't obliged to go."
"I'm seventeen and a quarter, Dad,
And ever so strong, you know."

* * * * *

"So you're off to France, Young Fellow My Lad,
And you're looking so fit and bright."
"I'm terribly sorry to leave you, Dad,
But I feel that I'm doing right."
"God bless you and keep you, Young Fellow My
Lad,
You're all of my life, you know."
"Don't worry. I'll soon be back, dear Dad,
And I'm awfully proud to go."

* * * * *

"Why don't you write, Young Fellow My Lad?
I watch for the post each day;
And I miss you so, and I'm awfully sad,
And it's months since you went away.
And I've had the fire in the parlour lit,
And I'm keeping it burning bright
Till my boy comes home; and here I sit
Into the quiet night."

* * * * *

"What is the matter, Young Fellow My Lad?
No letter again to-day.
Why did the postman look so sad,
And sigh as he turned away?
I hear them tell that we've gained new ground,
But a terrible price we've paid:
God grant, my boy, that you're safe and sound;
But oh I'm afraid, afraid."

* * * * *

"They've told me the truth, Young Fellow My Lad:
You'll never come back again.
(*Oh God! the dreams and the dreams I've had,*
And the hopes I've nursed in vain!)
For you passed in the night, Young Fellow My Lad,
And you proved in the cruel test
Of the screaming shell and the battle hell
That my boy was one of the best."

"So you'll live, you'll live, Young Fellow My Lad,
In the gleam of the evening star,
In the woodnote wild and the laugh of the child,
In all sweet things that are.
And you'll never die, my wonderful boy,
While life is noble and true;
For all our beauty and hope and joy
We will owe to our lads like you."

A SONG OF THE SANDBAGS

No, Bill, I'm not a-spooning out no patriotic tosh
(The cove be'ind the sandbags ain't a death-or-glory cuss).
And though I strafes 'em good and 'ard I doesn't 'ate the Boche,
I guess they're mostly decent, just the same as most of us.
I guess they loves their 'omes and kids as much as you or me;
And just the same as you or me they'd rather shake than fight;
And if we'd 'appened to be born at Berlin-on-the-Spree,
We'd be out there with 'Ans and Fritz, dead sure that we was right.

A-standin' up to the sandbags,
It's funny the thoughts wot come;
Starin' into the darkness,
'Earin' the bullets 'um;
(*Zing! Zip! Ping! Rip!*
'Ark 'ow the bullets 'um!)

A-leanin' against the sandbags
Wiv me rifle under me ear,
Oh, I've 'ad more thoughts on a sentry-go
Than I used to 'ave in a year.

I wonder, Bill, if 'Ans and Fritz is wonderin' like me
Wot's at the bottom of it all? Wot all the slaughter's for?
'E thinks 'e's right (of course 'e ain't), but this we both agree,
If them as made it 'ad to fight, there wouldn't be no war.
If them as lies in feather beds while we kips in the mud;
If them as makes their fortoons while we fights for 'em like 'ell;
If them as slings their pots of ink just 'ad to sling their blood:
By Crust! I'm thinkin' there'ud be another tale to tell.

Shiverin' up to the sandbags,
With a hicicle 'stead of a spine,
Don't it seem funny the things you think
'Ere in the firin' line:
(*Wee! Whut! Ziz! Zut!*
Lord! 'Ow the bullets whine!)

Hunkerin' down when a star-shell
Cracks in a sputter of light,
You can jaw to yer soul by the sandbags
Most any old time o' night.

They talks o' England's glory and a-'oldin' of our trade,
Of Empire and 'igh destiny until we're fair film-flammed;
But if it's for the likes o' that that bloody war is made,
Then wot I say is: Empire and 'igh destiny be damned!
There's only one good cause, Bill, for poor blokes like us to fight:
That's self-defence, for 'earth and 'ome, and them that bears our name;
And that's wot I'm a-doin' by the sandbags 'ere to-night. . . .
But Fritz out there will tell you 'e's a-doin' of the same.

Starin' over the sandbags,
Sick of the 'ole damn thing;
Firin' to keep meself awake,
'Earin' the bullets sing.
(*Hiss! Twang! Tsing! Pang!*
Saucy the bullets sing.)

Dreamin' 'ere by the sandbags
Of a day when war will cease,
When 'Ans and Fritz and Bill and me
Will clink our mugs in fraternity,
And the Brotherhood of Labour will be
The Brotherhood of Peace.

ON THE WIRE

Oh God, take the sun from the sky!
It's burning me, scorching me up.
God, can't You hear my cry?
Water! A poor, little cup!
It's laughing, the cursed sun!
See how it swells and swells
Fierce as a hundred hells!
God, will it never have done?
It's searing the flesh on my bones;
It's beating with hammers red
My eyeballs into my head;
It's parching my very moans.
See! It's the size of the sky,
And the sky is a torrent of fire,
Foaming on me as I lie
Here on the wire . . . the wire. . . .

Of the thousands that wheeze and hum
Heedlessly over my head,
Why can't a bullet come,
Pierce to my brain instead,

Blacken for ever my brain,
Finish for ever my pain?
Here in the hellish glare
Why must I suffer so?
Is it God doesn't care?
Is it God doesn't know?
Oh, to be killed outright,
Clean in the clash of the fight!
That is a golden death,
That is a boon; but this . . .
Drawing an anguished breath
Under a hot abyss,
Under a stooping sky
Of seething, sulphurous fire,
Scorching me up as I lie
Here on the wire . . . the wire. . . .

Hasten, Oh God, Thy night!
Hide from my eyes the sight
Of the body I stare and see
Shattered so hideously.
I can't believe that it's mine.
My body was white and sweet,
Flawless and fair and fine,
Shapely from head to feet;
Oh no, I can never be
The thing of horror I see
Under the rifle fire,
Trussed on the wire . . . the wire. . . .

Of night and of death I dream;
Night that will bring me peace,
Coolness and starry gleam,
Stillness and death's release:
Ages and ages have passed—
Lo! it is night at last.
Night! but the guns roar out.
Night! but the hosts attack.
Red and yellow and black
Geysers of doom upspout.
Silver and green and red
Star-shells hover and spread.
Yonder off to the right
Fiercely kindles the fight;
Roaring near and more near,
Thundering now in my ear;
Close to me, close . . . Oh, hark!
Someone moans in the dark.
I hear, but I cannot see,
I hear as the rest retire,
Someone is caught like me,
Caught on the wire . . . the wire. . . .

Again the shuddering dawn,
Weird and wicked and wan;
Again, and I've not yet gone.
The man whom I heard is dead.
Now I can understand:
A bullet hole in his head,
A pistol gripped in his hand.

Well, he knew what to do,—
Yes, and now I know too. . . .

Hark the resentful guns!
Oh, how thankful am I
To think my beloved ones
Will never know how I die!
I've suffered more than my share;
I'm shattered beyond repair;
I've fought like a man the fight,
And now I demand the right
(God! how his fingers cling!)
To do without shame this thing.
Good! there's a bullet still;
Now I am ready to fire;
Blame me, God, if You will,
Here on the wire . . . the wire. . . .

BILL'S GRAVE

I'm gatherin' flowers by the wayside to lay on the grave of Bill;
I've sneaked away from the billet, 'cause Jim wouldn't understand;
'E'd call me a silly fat'ead, and larf till it made 'im ill,
To see me 'ere in the cornfield, wiv a big bookay in me 'and.

For Jim and me we are rough 'uns, but Bill was one o' the best;
We 'listed and learned together to larf at the wust wot comes;
Then Bill copped a packet proper, and took 'is departure West,
So sudden 'e 'adn't a minit to say good-bye to 'is chums.

And they took me to where 'e was planted, a sort of a measly mound,
And, thinks I, 'ow Bill would be tickled, bein' so soft and queer,

If I gathered a bunch o' them wild-flowers, and
sort of arranged them round
Like a kind of a bloody head-piece . . . and that's
the reason I'm 'ere.

But not for the love of glory I wouldn't 'ave Jim
to know.
'E'd call me a slobberin' Cissy, and larf till 'is sides
was sore;
I'd 'ave larfed at meself meself too, it isn't so long
ago;
But some'ow it changes a feller, 'avin' a taste of
war.

It 'elps a man to be 'elpful, to know wot 'is pals is
worth
(Them golden poppies is blazin' like lamps some
fairy 'as lit);
I'm fond o' them big white dysies. . . . Now Jim's
o' the salt o' the earth;
But 'e 'as got a tongue wot's a terror, and 'e ain't
sentimental a bit.

I likes them blue chaps wot's 'idin' so shylike
among the corn.
Won't Bill be glad! We was allus thicker 'n
thieves, us three.
Why! 'Oo's that singin' so 'earty? *Jim!* And as
sure as I'm born,
'E's there in the giddy cornfields, a-gatherin'
flowers like me.

Quick! Drop me posy be'ind me. I watches 'im
for a while,
Then I says: "Wot 'o, there, Chummy! Wot
price the little bookay?"
And 'e starts like a bloke wot's guilty, and 'e says
with a sheepish smile:
"She's a bit of orl right, the widder wot keeps the
estaminay."

So 'e goes away in a 'urray, and I wishes 'im best
'o luck,
And I picks up me bunch o' wild-flowers, and the
light's gettin' sorto dim,
When I makes me way to the boneyard, and . . .
I stares like a man wot's stuck,
For wot do I see? *Bill's grave-mound strewn
with the flowers of Jim.*

Of course I won't never tell 'im, bein' a tactical lad;
And Jim parley-voos to the widder: "Trez beans,
lamoor; compree?"
Oh, 'e'd die of shame if 'e knew I knew; but say!
won't Bill be glad
When 'e stares through the bleedin' clods and
sees the blossoms of Jim and me!

JEAN DESPREZ

Oh ye whose hearts are resonant, and ring to War's romance,
Hear ye the story of a boy, a peasant boy of France;
A lad uncouth and warped with toil, yet who, when trial came,
Could feel within his soul upleap and soar the sacred flame;
Could stand upright, and scorn and smite, as only heroes may:
Oh, harken! Let me try to tell the tale of Jean Desprez.

With fire and sword the Teuton horde was ravaging the land,
And there was darkness and despair, grim death on every hand;
Red fields of slaughter sloping down to ruin's black abyss;
The wolves of war ran evil-fanged, and little did they miss.
And on they came with fear and flame, to burn and loot and slay,
Until they reached the red-roofed croft, the home of Jean Desprez.

"Rout out the village, one and all!" the Uhlan Captain said.
"Behold! Some hand has fired a shot. My trumpeter is dead.
Now shall they Prussian vengeance know; now shall they rue the day,
For by this sacred German slain, ten of these dogs shall pay."
They drove the cowering peasants forth, women and babes and men,
And from the last, with many a jeer, the Captain chose he ten;
Ten simple peasants, bowed with toil; they stood, they knew not why,
Against the grey wall of the church, hearing their children cry;
Hearing their wives and mothers wail, with faces dazed they stood.
A moment only. . . . *Ready! Fire!* They weltered in their blood.

But there was one who gazed unseen, who heard the frenzied cries,
Who saw these men in sabots fall before their children's eyes;
A Zouave wounded in a ditch, and knowing death was nigh,
He laughed with joy: "Ah! here is where I settle ere I die."

He clutched his rifle once again, and long he aimed
and well. . . .
A shot! Beside his victims ten the Uhlan Captain
fell.

They dragged the wounded Zouave out; their rage
was like a flame.
With bayonets they pinned him down, until their
Major came.
A blonde, full-blooded man he was, and arrogant
of eye;
He stared to see with shattered skull his favourite
Captain lie.
"Nay, do not finish him so quick, this foreign
swine," he cried;
"Go nail him to the big church door: he shall be
crucified."

With bayonets through hands and feet they nailed
the Zouave there,
And there was anguish in his eyes, and horror in
his stare;
"Water! A single drop!" he moaned; but how
they jeered at him,
And mocked him with an empty cup, and saw his
sight grow dim;
And as in agony of death with blood his lips were
wet,
The Prussian Major gaily laughed, and lit a
cigarette.

But 'mid the white-faced villagers who cowered in horror by,
Was one who saw the woeful sight, who heard the woeful cry:
"Water! One little drop, I beg! For love of Christ who died. . . ."
It was the little Jean Desprez who turned and stole aside;
It was the little bare-foot boy who came with cup abrim,
And walked up to the dying man, and gave the drink to him.

A roar of rage! They seize the boy; they tear him fast away.
The Prussian Major swings around; no longer is he gay.
His teeth are wolfishly agleam; his face all dark with spite:
"Go, shoot the brat," he snarls, "that dare defy our Prussian might.
Yet stay! I have another thought. I'll kindly be, and spare;
Quick! give the lad a rifle charged, and set him squarely there,
And bid him shoot, and shoot to kill. Haste! Make him understand.
The dying dog he fain would save shall perish by his hand.

And all his kindred they shall see, and all shall
curse his name,
Who bought his life at such a cost, the price of
death and shame."

They brought the boy, wild-eyed with fear; they
made him understand;
They stood him by the dying man, a rifle in his
hand.
"Make haste!" said they; "the time is short, and
you must kill or die."
The Major puffed his cigarette, amusement in his
eye.
And then the dying Zouave heard, and raised his
weary head:
"Shoot, son, 'twill be the best for both; shoot swift
and straight," he said.
"Fire first and last, and do not flinch; for lost to
hope am I;
And I will murmur: *Vive La France!* and bless
you ere I die."

Half-blind with blows the boy stood there; he
seemed to swoon and sway;
Then in that moment woke the soul of little Jean
Desprez.
He saw the woods go sheening down; the larks
were singing clear;
And oh! the scents and sounds of spring, how
sweet they were! how dear!

He felt the scent of new-mown hay, a soft breeze
fanned his brow;
Oh, God! the paths of peace and toil! How
precious were they now!
The summer days and summer ways, how bright
with hope and bliss!
The autumn such a dream of gold . . . and all
must end in this:
This shining rifle in his hand, that shambles all
around;
The Zouave there with dying glare; the blood upon
the ground;
The brutal faces round him ringed, the evil eyes
aflame;
That Prussian bully standing by, as if he watched
a game.
"Make haste and shoot," the Major sneered; "a
minute more I give;
A minute more to kill your friend, if you yourself
would live."

They only saw a bare-foot boy, with blanched and
twitching face;
They did not see within his eyes the glory of his
race;
The glory of a million men who for fair France
have died,
The splendour of self-sacrifice that will not be
denied.

Yet . . . he was but a peasant boy, and oh! but life
was sweet. . . .
"Your minute's nearly gone, my lad," he heard a
voice repeat.
"Shoot! Shoot!" the dying Zouave moaned;
"Shoot! Shoot!" the soldiers said.
Then Jean Desprez reached out and shot . . . *the*
Prussian Major dead!

GOING HOME

I'm goin' 'ome to Blighty—ain't I glad to 'ave the chance!
I'm loaded up wiv fightin', and I've 'ad my fill o' France;
I'm feelin' so excited-like, I want to sing and dance,
For I'm goin' 'ome to Blighty in the mawnin'.

I'm goin' 'ome to Blighty: can you wonder as I'm gay?
I've got a wound I wouldn't sell for 'alf a year o' pay;
A harm that's mashed to jelly in the nicest sort o' way,
For it takes me 'ome to Blighty in the mawnin'.

'Ow everlastin' keen I was on gettin' to the front!
I'd ginger for a dozen, and I 'elped to bear the brunt;
But Cheese and Crust! I'm crazy, now I've done me little stunt,
To sniff the air of Blighty in the mawnin'.

I've looked upon the wine that's white, and on the
wine that's red;
I've looked on cider flowin', till it fairly turned me
'ead;
But oh, the finest scoff will be, when all is done and
said,
A pint o' Bass in Blighty in the mawnin'!

I'm goin' back to Blighty, which I left to strafe the
'Un;
I've fought in bloody battles, and I've 'ad a 'eap of
fun;
But now me flipper's busted, and I fink me dooty's
done,
And I'll kiss me gel in Blighty in the
mawnin'.

Oh, there be furrin' lands to see, and some of 'em
be fine;
And there be furrin' gels to kiss, and scented
furrin' wine;
But there's no land like England, and no other gel
like mine:
Thank Gawd for dear old Blighty in the
mawnin'.

COCOTTE

When a girl's sixteen, and as poor as she's pretty,
And she hasn't a friend and she hasn't a home,
Heigh-ho! She's as safe in Paris city
As a lamb night-strayed where the wild wolves roam;
And that was I; oh, it's seven years now
(Some water's run down the Seine since then),
And I've almost forgotten the pangs and the tears now,
And I've almost taken the measure of men.

Oh, I found me a lover who loved me only,
Artist and poet, and almost a boy.
And my heart was bruised, and my life was lonely,
And him I adored with a wonderful joy.
If he'd come to me with his pockets empty,
How we'd have laughed in a garret gay!
But he was rich, and in radiant plenty
We lived in a villa at Viroflay.

Then came the War, and of bliss bereft me;
Then came the call, and he went away;
All that he had in the world he left me,
With the rose-wreathed villa at Viroflay.

Then came the news and the tragic story:
My hero, my splendid lover was dead,
Sword in hand on the field of glory,
And he died with my name on his lips, they said.

So here am I in my widow's mourning,
The weeds I've really no right to wear;
And women fix me with eyes of scorning,
Call me "cocotte," but I do not care.
And men look at me with eyes that borrow
The brightness of love, but I turn away;
Alone, say I, I will live with Sorrow,
In my little villa at Viroflay.

And lo! I'm living alone with *Pity*,
And they say that pity from love's not far;
Let me tell you all: last week in the city
I took the metro at Saint Lazare;
And the carriage was crowded to overflowing,
And when there entered at Chateaudun
Two wounded *poilus* with medals showing,
I eagerly gave my seat to one.

You should have seen them: they'd slipped death's
clutches,
But sadder a sight you will rarely find;
One had a leg off and walked on crutches,
The other, a bit of a boy, was blind.

And they both sat down, and the lad was trying
To grope his way as a blind man tries;
And half of the women around were crying,
And some of the men had tears in their eyes.

How he stirred me, this blind boy, clinging
Just like a child to his crippled chum.
But I did not cry. Oh no; a singing
Came to my heart for a year so dumb.
Then I knew that at three-and-twenty
There is wonderful work to be done,
Comfort and kindness and joy in plenty,
Peace and light and love to be won.

Oh, thought I, could mine eyes be given
To one who will live in the dark alway!
To love and to serve—'twould make life Heaven
Here in my villa at Viroflay.
So I left my *poilus:* and now you wonder
Why to-day I am so elate. . . .
Look! In the glory of sunshine yonder
They're bringing my blind boy in at the gate.

MY BAY'NIT

When first I left Blighty they gave me a bay'nit,
And told me it 'ad to be smothered wiv gore;
But blimey! I 'aven't been able to stain it,
So far as I've gone, wiv the vintage of war.
For ain't it a fraud! When a Boche and yours truly
Gits into a mix in the grit and the grime,
'E jerks up 'is 'ands wiv a yell, and 'e's duly
Part of me outfit every time.

Left, right, Hans and Fritz!
Goose step, keep up yer mits!
Oh my, ain't it a shyme!
Part of me outfit every time.

At toastin' a biscuit me bay'nit's a dandy;
I've used it to open a bully beef can;
For pokin' the fire it comes in werry 'andy;
For any old thing but for stickin' a man.

'Ow often I've said: "'Ere, I'm goin' to press you
Into a 'Un till you're seasoned for prime,"
And fiercely I rushes to do it, but bless you!
Part of me outfit every time.

Lor, yus; *don't* they look glad?
Right O! 'Owl Kamerad!
Oh my, always the syme!
Part of me outfit every time.

I'm 'untin' for someone to christen me bay'nit,
Some nice juicy Chewton wot's fightin' in France;
I'm fairly down'earted—'ow *can* yer explain it?
I keeps gettin' prisoners every chance.
As soon as they sees me they ups and surrenders,
Extended like monkeys wot's tryin' to climb;
And I uses me bay'nit—to slit their suspenders—
Part of me outfit every time.

Four 'Uns; lor, wot a bag!
'Ere, Fritz, sample a fag!
Oh my, ain't it a gyme!
Part of me outfit every time.

CARRY ON!

It's easy to fight when everything's right,
And you're mad with the thrill and the glory;
It's easy to cheer when victory's near,
And wallow in fields that are gory.
It's a different song when everything's wrong,
When you're feeling infernally mortal;
When it's ten against one, and hope there is none,
Buck up, little soldier, and chortle:

Carry on! Carry on!
There isn't much punch in your blow.
You're glaring and staring and hitting out blind;
You're muddy and bloody, but never you mind.
Carry on! Carry on!
You haven't the ghost of a show.
It's looking like death, but while you've a breath,
Carry on, my son! Carry on!

And so in the strife of the battle of life
It's easy to fight when you're winning;
It's easy to slave, and starve and be brave,
When the dawn of success is beginning.
But the man who can meet despair and defeat
With a cheer, there's the man of God's choosing;
The man who can fight to Heaven's own height
Is the man who can fight when he's losing.

Carry on! Carry on!
Things never were looming so black;
But show that you haven't a cowardly streak,
And though you're unlucky you never are weak.
Carry on! Carry on!
Brace up for another attack.
It's looking like hell, but—you never can tell:
Carry on, old man! Carry on!

There are some who drift out in the deserts of doubt,
And some who in brutishness wallow;
There are others, I know, who in piety go,
Because of a Heaven to follow.
But to labour with zest, and to give of your best,
For the sweetness and joy of the giving;
To help folks along with a hand and a song:
Why, there's the real sunshine of living.

Carry on! Carry on!
Fight the good fight and true;
Believe in your mission, greet life with a cheer;
There's big work to do and that's why you are here.
Carry on! Carry on!
Let the world be the better for you;
And at last when you die, let this be your cry:
Carry on, my soul! Carry on!

OVER THE PARAPET

All day long when the shells sail over
I stand at the sandbags and take my chance;
But at night, at night I'm a reckless rover,
And over the parapet gleams Romance.
Romance! Romance! How I've dreamed it, writing
Dreary old records of money and mart,
Me with my head chuckful of fighting
And the blood of vikings to thrill my heart.

But little I thought that my time was coming,
Sudden and splendid, supreme and soon;
And here I am with the bullets humming
As I crawl and I curse the light of the moon.
Out alone, for adventure thirsting,
Out in mysterious No Man's Land;
Prone with the dead when a star-shell, bursting,
Flares on the horrors on every hand.

There are ruby stars and they drip and wiggle;
And the grasses gleam in a light blood-red;
There are emerald stars, and their tails they
wriggle,
And ghastly they glare on the face of the dead.

But the worst of all are the stars of whiteness,
That spill in a pool of pearly flame,
Pretty as gems in their silver brightness,
And etching a man for a bullet's aim.

Yet oh, it's great to be here with danger,
Here in the weird, death-pregnant dark,
In the devil's pasture a stealthy ranger,
When the moon is decently hiding. Hark!
What was that? Was it just the shiver
Of an eerie wind or a clammy hand?
The rustle of grass, or the passing quiver
Of one of the ghosts of No Man's Land?

It's only at night when the ghosts awaken,
And gibber and whisper horrible things;
For to every foot of this God-forsaken
Zone of jeopard some horror clings.
Ugh! What was that? It felt like a jelly,
That flattish mound in the noisome grass;
You three big rats running free of its belly,
Out of my way and let me pass!

But if there's horror, there's beauty, wonder;
The trench lights gleam and the rockets play.
That flood of magnificent orange yonder
Is a battery blazing miles away.

With a rush and a singing a great shell passes;
The rifles resentfully bicker and brawl,
And here I crouch in the dew-drenched grasses,
And look and listen and love it all.

God! what a life! But I must make haste now,
Before the shadow of night be spent.
It's little the time there is to waste now,
If I'd do the job for which I was sent.
My bombs are right and my clippers ready,
And I wriggle out to the chosen place,
When I hear a rustle. . . . Steady! . . . Steady!
Who am I staring slap in the face?

There in the dark I can hear him breathing,
A foot away, and as still as death;
And my heart beats hard, and my brain is seething,
And I know he's a Hun by the smell of his breath.
Then: "Will you surrender?" I whisper hoarsely,
For it's death, swift death to utter a cry.
"English schwein-hund!" he murmurs coarsely.
"Then we'll fight it out in the dark," say I.

So we grip and we slip and we trip and wrestle
There in the gutter of No Man's Land;
And I feel my nails in his wind-pipe nestle,
And he tries to gouge, but I bite his hand.

And he tries to squeal, but I squeeze him tighter:
"Now," I say, "I can kill you fine;
But tell me first, you Teutonic blighter!
Have you any children?" He answers: "Nein."

Nine! Well, I cannot kill such a father,
So I tie his hands and I leave him there.
Do I finish my little job? Well, rather;
And I get home safe with some light to spare.
Heigh-ho! by day it's just prosy duty,
Doing the same old song and dance;
But oh! with the night—joy, glory, beauty:
Over the parapet—Life, Romance!

THE BALLAD OF SOULFUL SAM

You want me to tell you a story, a yarn of the firin' line,
Of our thin red kharki 'eroes, out there where the bullets whine;
Out there where the bombs are bustin', and the cannons like 'ell-doors slam—
Just order another drink, boys, and I'll tell you of Soulful Sam.

Oh, Sam, he was never 'ilarious, though I've 'ad some mates as was wus;
He 'adn't C.B. on his programme, he never was known to cuss.
For a card or a skirt or a beer-mug he 'adn't a friendly word;
But when it came down to Scriptures, say! wasn't he just a bird!

He always 'ad tracts in his pocket, the which he would haste to present,
And though the fellers would use them in ways that they never was meant,

I used to read 'em religious, and frequent I've been impressed
By some of them bundles of 'oly dope he carried around in his vest.

For I—and oh, 'ow I shudder at the 'orror the word conveys!
'Ave been—let me whisper it 'oarsely—a gambler 'alf of me days;
A gambler you 'ear—a gambler. It makes me wishful to weep,
And yet 'ow it's true, my brethren!—I'd rather gamble than sleep.

I've gambled the 'ole world over, from Monte Carlo to Maine;
From Dawson City to Dover, from San Francisco to Spain.
Cards! They 'ave been me ruin. They've taken me pride and me pelf,
And when I'd no one to play with—why, I'd go and I'd play by meself.

And Sam 'e would sit and watch me, as I shuffled a greasy deck,
And 'e'd say: "You're bound to Perdition." And I'd answer: "Git off me neck!"

And that's 'ow we came to get friendly, though
built on a different plan,
Me wot's a desprite gambler, 'im sich a good young
man.

But on to me tale. Just imagine . . . Darkness!
The battle-front!
The furious 'Uns attackin'! Us ones a-bearin' the
brunt!
Me crouchin' be'ind a sandbag, tryin' 'ard to keep
calm,
When I 'ears someone singin' a 'ymn toon; be'old!
it is Soulful Sam.

Yes; right in the crash of the combat, in the fury
of flash and flame,
'E was shootin' and singin' serenely as if 'e enjoyed
the same.
And there in the 'eat of the battle, as the 'ordes of
demons attacked,
He dipped down into 'is tunic, and 'e 'anded me
out a tract.

Then a star-shell flared, and I read it: Oh, Flee
From the Wrath to Come!
Nice cheerful subject, I tell yer, when you're 'earin'
the bullets 'um.

And before I 'ad time to thank 'im, just one of
them bits of lead
Comes slingin' along in a 'urry, and it 'its my part-
ner. . . . Dead?

No, siree! not by a long sight! For it plugged
'im 'ard on the chest,
Just where 'e'd tracts for a army corps stowed
away in 'is vest.
On its mission of death that bullet 'ustled along,
and it caved
A 'ole in them tracts to 'is 'ide, boys—but the life o'
me pal was saved.

And there as 'e showed me in triumph, and 'orror
was chokin' me breath,
On came another bullet on its 'orrible mission of
death;
On through the night it cavorted, seekin' its 'aven
of rest,
And it zipped through a crack in the sandbags, and
it wolloped me bang on the breast.

Was I killed, do you ask? Oh no, boys. Why
am I sittin' 'ere
Gazin' with mournful vision at a mug long empty
of beer?

With a throat as dry as a—oh, thanky! I don't
much mind if I do.
Beer with a dash of 'Ollands, that's my particular
brew.

Yes, that was a terrible moment. It 'ammered me
'ard o'er the 'eart;
It bowled me down like a ninepin, and I looked for
the gore to start;
And I saw in the flash of a moment, in that thunder
of hate and strife,
Me wretched past like a pitchur—the sins of a
gambler's life.

For I 'ad no tracts to save me, to thwart that mad
missile's doom;
I 'ad no pious pamphlets to 'elp me to cheat the
tomb;
I 'ad no 'oly leaflets to baffle a bullet's aim;
I'd only—a deck of cards, boys, but . . . *it seemed
to do just the same.*

ONLY A BOCHE

We brought him in from between the lines: we'd
better have let him lie;
For what's the use of risking one's skin for a *type*
that's going to die?
What's the use of tearing him loose under a gruel-
ling fire,
When he's shot in the head, and worse than dead,
and all messed up on the wire?
However, I say, we brought him in. *Diable!* The
mud was bad;
The trench was crooked and greasy and high, and
oh, what a time we had!
And often we slipped, and often we tripped, but
never he made a moan;
And how we were wet with blood and with sweat!
But we carried him in like our own.

Now there he lies in the dug-out dim, awaiting the
ambulance,
And the doctor shrugs his shoulders at him, and
remarks: "He hasn't a chance."
And we squat and smoke at our game of bridge on
the glistening, straw-packed floor,
And above our oaths we can hear his breath deep
drawn in a kind of snore.

For the dressing station is long and low, and the candles gutter dim,
And the mean light falls on the cold clay walls and our faces bristly and grim;
And we flap our cards on the lousy straw, and we laugh and jibe as we play,
And you'd never know that the cursed foe was less than a mile away.
As we con our cards in the rancid gloom, oppressed by that snoring breath,
You'd never dream that our broad roof-beam was swept by the broom of death.

Heigh-ho! My turn for the dummy hand; I rise and I stretch a bit;
The fetid air is making me yawn, and my cigarette's unlit,
So I go to the nearest candle flame, and the man we brought is there,
And his face is white in the shabby light, and I stand at his feet and stare.
Stand for awhile, and quietly stare: for strange though it seems to be,
The dying Boche on the stretcher there has a queer resemblance to me.

It gives one a kind of a turn, you know, to come on a thing like that.
It's just as if I were lying there, with a turban of blood for a hat,

Lying there in a coat grey-green instead of a coat
grey-blue,
With one of my eyes all shot away, and my brain
half tumbling through;
Lying there with a chest that heaves like a bellows
up and down,
And a cheek as white as snow on a grave, and lips
that are coffee brown.

And confound him, too! He wears, like me, on
his finger a wedding ring,
And around his neck, as around my own, by a
greasy bit of string,
A locket hangs with a woman's face, and I turn it
about to see:
Just as I thought . . . on the other side the faces
of children three;
Clustered together cherub-like, three little laugh-
ing girls,
With the usual tiny rosebud mouths and the usual
silken curls.
"Zut!" I say, "he has beaten me; for me, I have
only two,"
And I push the locket beneath his shirt, feeling a
little blue.

Oh, it isn't cheerful to see a man, the marvellous
work of God,
Crushed in the mutilation mill, crushed to a smeary
clod;

Oh, it isn't cheerful to hear him moan, but it isn't
that I mind,
It isn't the anguish that goes with him, it's the
anguish he leaves behind.
For his going opens a tragic door that gives on a
world of pain,
And the death he dies, those who live and love will
die again and again.

So here I am at my cards once more, but it's kind
of spoiling my play,
Thinking of those three brats of his so many a mile
away.
War is war, and he's only a Boche, and we all of
us take our chance;
But all the same I'll be mighty glad when I'm hear-
ing the ambulance.
One foe the less, but all the same I'm heartily glad
I'm not
The man who gave him his broken head, the sniper
who fired the shot. . . .
No trumps you make it, I think you said? You'll
pardon me if I err;
For a moment I thought of other things. . . . *Mon
Dieu! Quelle vache de guerre.*

PILGRIMS

For oh, when the war will be over
We'll go and we'll look for our dead;
We'll go when the bee's on the clover,
And the plume of the poppy is red:
We'll go when the year's at its gayest,
When meadows are laughing with flow'rs;
And there where the crosses are greyest,
We'll seek for the cross that is ours.

For they cry to us: *Friends, we are lonely,*
A-weary the night and the day;
But come in the blossom-time only,
Come when our graves will be gay:
When daffodils all are a-blowing,
And larks are a-thrilling the skies,
Oh, come with the hearts of you glowing,
And the joy of the Spring in your eyes.

But never, oh, never come sighing,
For ours was the Splendid Release;
And oh, but 'twas joy in the dying
To know we were winning you Peace!
So come when the valleys are sheening,
And fledged with the promise of grain;
And here where our graves will be greening,
Just smile and be happy again.

And so, when the war will be over,
We'll seek for the Wonderful One;
And maiden will look for her lover,
And mother will look for her son;
And there will be end to our grieving,
And gladness will gleam over loss,
As—glory beyond all believing!
We point . . . to a name on a cross.

MY PRISONER

We was in a crump-'ole, 'im and me;
Fightin' wiv our bayonets was we;
Fightin' 'ard as 'ell we was,
Fightin' fierce as fire because
It was 'im or me as must be downed;
'E was twice as big as me;
I was 'arf the weight of 'e;
We was like a terryer and a 'ound.

'Struth! But 'e was sich a 'andsome bloke.
Me—I'm 'andsome as a chunk o' coke.
Did I give it 'im? Not 'arf!
Why, it fairly made me laugh,
'Cos 'is bloomin' bellows wasn't sound.
Couldn't fight for monkey nuts.
Soon I gets 'im in the guts,
There 'e lies a-floppin' on the ground.

In I goes to finish up the job.
Quick 'e throws 'is 'ands above 'is nob;
Speakin' English good as me:
"'Tain't no use to kill," says 'e;

"Can't yer tyke me prisoner instead?"
"Why, I'd like to, sir," says I;
"But—yer knows the reason why:
If we pokes our noses out we're dead.

"Sorry, sir. Then, on the other 'and
(As a gent like you must understand),
If I 'olds you longer 'ere,
Wiv yer pals so werry near,
It's me 'oo'll 'ave a free trip to Berlin;
If I lets yer go away,
Why, you'll fight another day:
See the sitooation I am in.

"Anyway I'll tell you wot I'll do,
Bein' kind and seein' as it's you,
Knowin' 'ow it's cold, the feel
Of a 'alf a yard o' steel,
I'll let yer 'ave a rifle ball instead;
Now, jist think yerself in luck. . . .
'Ere, ol' man! You keep 'em stuck,
Them saucy dooks 'o yours, above yer 'ead."

'Ow 'is mits shot up, it made me smile!
'Ow 'e seemed to ponder for a while!
Then 'e says: "It seems a shyme,
Me, a man wot's known ter Fyme:

Give me blocks of stone, I'll give yer gods.
Whereas, pardon me, I'm sure
You, my friend, are still obscure. . . ."
"In war," says I, "that makes no blurry odds."

Then says 'e: "I've painted picters too. . . .
Oh, dear God! the work I planned to do,
And to think this is the end!"
"'Ere," says I, "my hartist friend,
Don't you give yeself no friskin' airs.
Picters, statoos, is that why
You should be let off to die?
That the best ye done? Just say yer prayers."

Once again 'e seems ter think awhile.
Then 'e smiles a werry 'aughty smile:
"Why, no, sir, it's not the best;
There's a locket next me breast,
Picter of a gel 'oo's eyes are blue.
That's the best I've done," says 'e.
"That's me darter, aged three. . . ."
"Blimy!" says I. "I've a nipper, too."

Straight I chucks my rifle to one side;
Shows 'im wiv a lovin' father's pride
Me own little Mary Jane.
Proud 'e shows me 'is Elaine,
And we talks as friendly as can be;
Then I 'elps 'im on 'is way,
'Opes 'e's sife at 'ome to-day,
Wonders—*'ow would 'e 'ave treated me?*

TRI-COLOUR

Poppies, you try to tell me, glowing there in the wheat;
Poppies! Ah no! You mock me: it's blood, I tell you, it's blood.
It's gleaming wet in the grasses; it's glist'ning warm in the wheat;
It dabbles the ferns and the clover; it brims in an angry flood;
It leaps to the startled heavens; it smothers the sun; it cries
With scarlet voices of triumph from blossom and bough and blade.
See the bright horror of it! It's roaring out of the skies,
And the whole red world is a-welter. . . . Oh God! I'm afraid! I'm afraid!

Cornflowers, you say, just cornflowers, gemming the golden grain;
Ah no! You can't deceive me. Can't I believe my eyes?
Look! It's the dead, my comrades, stark on the dreadful plain,
All in their dark-blue blouses, staring up at the skies.

Comrades of canteen laughter, dumb in the yellow wheat.
See how they sprawl and huddle! See how their brows are white!
Goaded on to the shambles, there in death and defeat. . . .
Father of Pity, hide them! Hasten, O God, Thy night!

Lilies (the light is waning), only lilies you say,
Nestling and softly shining there where the spear-grass waves.
No, my friend, I know better; brighter I see than day:
It's the poor little wooden crosses over their quiet graves.
Oh, how they're gleaming, gleaming! See! each cross has a crown.
Yes, it's true I am dying; little will be the loss. . . .
Darkness . . . but look! In Heaven a light, and it's shining down. . . .
God's accolade! Lift me up, friends. I'm going to win *my Cross.*

A POT OF TEA

You make it in your mess-tin by the brazier's rosy
gleam;
You watch it cloud, then settle amber clear;
You lift it with your bay'nit and you sniff the fra-
grant steam;
The very breath of it is ripe with cheer.
You're awful cold and dirty, and a-cursin' of your
lot;
You scoff the blushin' 'alf of it, so rich and rippin'
'ot;
It bucks you up like anythink, just seems to touch
the spot:
God bless the man that first discovered Tea!

Since I came out to fight in France, which ain't the
other day,
I think I've drunk enough to float a barge;
All kinds of fancy foreign dope, from caffy and
doo lay,
To rum they serves you out before a charge.

In back rooms of estaminays I've gurgled pints of cham;
I've swilled down mugs of cider till I've felt a bloomin' dam;
But 'struth! they all ain't in it with the vintage of Assam:
God bless the man that first invented Tea!

I think them lazy lumps o' gods wot kips on asphodel
Swigs nectar that's a flavour of Oolong;
I only wish them sons o' guns a-grillin' down in 'ell,
Could 'ave their daily ration of Suchong.
Hurrah! I'm off to battle, which is 'ell and 'eaven too;
And if I don't give some poor bloke a sexton's job to do,
To-night, by Fritz's camp fire, won't I 'ave a gorgeous brew
(For fightin' mustn't interfere with Tea).
To-night we'll all be tellin' of the Boches that we slew,
As we drink the giddy victory in Tea.

THE REVELATION

The same old sprint in the morning, boys, to the same old din and smut;
Chained all day to the same old desk, down in the same old rut;
Posting the same old greasy books, catching the same old train:
Oh, how will I manage to stick it all, if I ever get back again?

We've bidden good-bye to life in a cage, we're finished with pushing a pen;
They're pumping us full of bellicose rage, they're showing us how to be men.
We're only beginning to find ourselves; we're wonders of brawn and thew;
But when we go back to our Cissy jobs—oh, what are we going to do?

For shoulders curved with the counter stoop will be carried erect and square;
And faces white from the office light will be bronzed by the open air;

And we'll walk with the stride of a new-born pride,
with a new-found joy in our eyes,
Scornful men who have diced with death under the
naked skies.

And when we get back to the dreary grind, and
the bald-headed boss's call,
Don't you think that the dingy window-blind, and
the dingier office wall,
Will suddenly melt to a vision of space, of violent,
flame-scarred night?
Then . . . oh, the joy of the danger-thrill, and oh,
the roar of the fight!

Don't you think as we peddle a card of pins the
counter will fade away,
And again we'll be seeing the sand-bag rims, and
the barb-wire's misty grey?
As a flat voice asks for a pound of tea, don't you
fancy we'll hear instead
The night-wind moan and the soothing drone of
the packet that's overhead?

Don't you guess that the things we're seeing now
will haunt us through all the years;
Heaven and hell rolled into one, glory and blood
and tears;
Life's pattern picked with a scarlet thread, where
once we wove with a grey,
To remind us all how we played our part in the
shock of an epic day?

Oh, we're booked for the Great Adventure now,
we're pledged to the Real Romance;
We'll find ourselves or we'll lose ourselves somewhere in giddy old France;
We'll know the zest of the fighter's life; the best that we have we'll give;
We'll hunger and thirst; we'll die . . . but first—we'll live; by the gods, we'll live!

We'll breathe free air and we'll bivouac under the starry sky;
We'll march with men, and we'll fight with men, and we'll see men laugh and die;
We'll know such joy as we never dreamed; we'll fathom the deeps of pain:
But the hardest bit of it all will be—when we come back home again.

For some of us smirk in a chiffon shop, and some of us teach in a school;
Some of us help with the seat of our pants to polish an office stool;
The merits of somebody's soap or jam some of us seek to explain,
But all of us wonder what we'll do when we have to go back again.

GRAND-PÈRE

And so when he reached my bed
The General made a stand:
"My brave young fellow," he said,
"I would shake your hand."

So I lifted my arm, the right,
With never a hand at all;
Only a stump, a sight
Fit to appal.

"Well, well. Now that's too bad!
That's sorrowful luck," he said;
"But there! You give me, my lad,
The left instead."

So from under the blanket's rim
I raised and showed him the other,
A snag as ugly and grim
As its ugly brother.

He looked at each jagged wrist;
He looked but he did not speak;
And then he bent down and kissed
Me on either cheek.

You wonder now I don't mind
I hadn't a hand to offer. . . .
They tell me (you know I'm blind)
'Twas Grand-père Joffre.

SON

He hurried away, young heart of joy, under our Devon sky!
And I watched him go, my beautiful boy, and a weary woman was I.
For my hair is grey, and his was gold; he'd the best of his life to live;
And I'd loved him so, and I'm old, I'm old; and he's all I had to give.

Ah yes, he was proud and swift and gay, but oh how my eyes were dim!
With the sun in his heart he went away, but he took the sun with him.
For look! How the leaves are falling now, and the winter won't be long. . . .
Oh boy, my boy with the sunny brow, and the lips of love and of song!

How we used to sit at the day's sweet end, we two by the firelight's gleam,
And we'd drift to the Valley of Let's Pretend, on the beautiful river of Dream.

Oh dear little heart! All wealth untold would I
gladly, gladly pay
Could I just for a moment closely hold that golden
head to my grey.

For I gaze in the fire, and I'm seeing there a child,
and he waves to me;
And I run and I hold him up in the air, and he
laughs and shouts with glee;
A little bundle of love and mirth, crying: "Come,
Mumsie dear!"
Ah me! If he called from the ends of the earth I
know that my heart would hear.

* * * * *

Yet the thought comes thrilling through all my
pain: how worthier could he die?
Yea, a loss like that is a glorious gain, and pitiful
proud am I.
For Peace must be bought with blood and tears,
and the boys of our hearts must pay;
And so in our joy of the after-years, let us bless
them every day.

And though I know there's a hasty grave with a
poor little cross at its head,
And the gold of his youth he so gladly gave, yet to
me he'll never be dead.
And the sun in my Devon lane will be gay, and my
boy will be with me still,
So I'm finding the heart to smile and say: "Oh
God, if it be Thy Will!"

THE BLACK DUDEEN

Humping it here in the dug-out,
Sucking me black dudeen,
I'd like to say in a general way
There's nothing like Nickyteen;
There's nothing like Nickyteen, me boys,
Be it pipes or snipes or cigars;
So be sure that a bloke
Has plenty to smoke,
If you wants him to fight your wars.

When I've eat my fill and my belt is snug,
I begin to think of my baccy plug.
I whittle a fill in my horny palm,
And the bowl of me old clay pipe I cram.
I trim the edges, I tamp it down,
I nurse a light with an anxious frown;
I begin to draw, and my cheeks tuck in,
And all my face is a blissful grin;
And up in a cloud the good smoke goes,
And the good pipe glimmers and fades and glows;

In its throat it chuckles a cheery song,
For I likes it hot and I likes it strong.
Oh, it's good is grub when you're feeling hollow,
But the best of a meal's the smoke to follow.

There was Micky and me on a night patrol,
Having to hide in a fizz-bang hole;
And sure I thought I was worse than dead
Wi' them crump-crumps hustlin' over me head.
Sure I thought 'twas the dirty spot,
Hammer and tongs till the air was hot.
And mind you, water up to your knees.
And cold! A monkey of brass would freeze.
And if we ventured our noses out
A "typewriter" clattered its pills about.
The field of glory! Well, I don't think!
I'd sooner be safe and snug in clink.

Then Micky, he goes and he cops one bad,
He always was having ill-luck, poor lad.
Says he: "Old chummy, I'm booked right
through;
Death and me 'as a wrongday voo.
But . . . 'aven't you got a pinch of shag?—
I'd sell me perishin' soul for a fag."
And there he shivered and cussed his luck,
So I gave him me old black pipe to suck.
And he heaves a sigh, and he takes to it
Like a babby takes to his mammy's tit;
Like an infant takes to his mother's breast,
Poor little Micky! he "travelled West."

But the dawn was near, though the night was
black,
So I left him there and I started back.
And I laughed as the silly old bullets came,
For the bullet ain't made wot's got me name.
Yet some of 'em buzzed onhealthily near,
And one little blighter just chipped me ear.
But there! I got to the trench all right,
When sudden I jumped wi' a start o' fright,
And a word that doesn't look well in type:
I'd clean forgotten me old clay pipe.

So I had to do it all over again,
Crawling out on that filthy plain.
Through shells and bombs and bullets and all—
Only this time—I do not crawl.
I run like a man wot's missing a train,
Or a tom-cat caught in a plump of rain.
I hear the spit of a quick-fire gun
Tickle my heels, but I run, I run.
Through crash and crackle, and flicker and flame,
(Oh, the packet ain't issued wot's got me name!)
I run like a man that's no ideer
Of hunting around for a sooveneer.
I run bang into a German chap,
And he stares like an owl, so I bash his map.
And just to show him that I'm his boss,
I gives him a kick on the parados.
And I marches him back with me all serene,
With, *tucked in me gub, me old dudeen.*

Sitting here in the trenches
Me heart's a-splittin' with spleen,
For a parcel o' lead comes missing me head,
But it smashes me old dudeen
God blast that red-headed sniper!
I'll give him somethin' to snipe;
Before the war's through
Just see how I do
That blighter that smashed me pipe.

THE LITTLE PIOU-PIOU

Oh, some of us lolled in the château,
And some of us slinked in the slum;
But now we are here with a song and a cheer
To serve at the sign of the drum.
They put us in trousers of scarlet,
In big sloppy ulsters of blue;
In boots that are flat, a box of a hat,
And they call us the little piou-piou,
Piou-piou,
The laughing and quaffing piou-piou;
The swinging and singing piou-piou;
And so with a rattle we march to the battle,
The weary but cheery piou-piou.

Encore un petit verre de vin,
Pour nous mettre en route;
Encore un petit verre de vin
Pour nous mettre en train.

They drive us head-on for the slaughter;
We haven't got much of a chance;
The issue looks bad, but we're awfully glad
To battle and die for La France.

For some must be killed, that is certain;
There's only one's duty to do;
So we leap to the fray in the glorious way
They expect of the little piou-piou.
En avant!
The way of the gallant piou-piou;
The dashing and smashing piou-piou;
The way grim and gory that leads us to glory
Is the way of the little piou-piou.

Allons, enfants de la Patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé.

To-day you would scarce recognize us,
Such veterans warwise are we;
So grimy and hard, so calloused and scarred,
So "crummy," yet gay as can be.
We've finished with trousers of scarlet,
They're giving us breeches of blue,
With a helmet instead of a cap on our head,
Yet still we're the little piou-piou.
Nous les aurons!
The jesting, unresting piou-piou;
The cheering, unfearing piou-piou;
The keep-your-head-level and fight-like-the-devil,
The dying, defying piou-piou.

À la bayonette! Jusqu'a la mort!
Sonnez la charge, clairons!

BILL THE BOMBER

The poppies gleamed like bloody pools through
cotton-woolly mist;
The Captain kept a-lookin' at the watch upon his
wrist;
And there we smoked and squatted, as we watched
the shrapnel flame;
'Twas wonnerful, I'm tellin' you, how fast them
bullets came.
'Twas weary work the waiting, though; I tried to
sleep a wink,
For waitin' means a-thinkin', and it doesn't do to
think.
So I closed my eyes a little, and I had a niceish
dream
Of a-standin' by a dresser with a dish of Devon
cream;
But I hadn't time to sample it, for suddenlike I
woke:
"Come on, me lads!" the Captain says, 'n I climbed
out through the smoke.

We spread out in the open: it was like a bath of
lead;
But the boys they cheered and hollered fit to raise
the bloody dead,

Till a beastly bullet copped 'em, then they lay
without a sound,
And it's odd—we didn't seem to heed them corpses
on the ground.
And I kept on thinkin', thinkin' as the bullets faster
flew,
How they picks the werry best men, and they lets
the rotters through;
So indiscriminatin' like, they spares a man of sin,
And a rare lad wot's a husband and a father gets
done in.
And while havin' these reflections and advancin' on
the run,
A bullet biffs me shoulder, and says I: "That's
number one."

Well, it downed me for a jiffy, but I didn't lose me
calm,
For I knew that I was needed: I'm a bomber, so
I am.
I 'ad lost me cap and rifle, but I "carried on"
because
I 'ad me bombs and knew that they was needed, so
they was.
We didn't 'ave no singin' now, nor many men to
cheer;
Maybe the shrapnel drowned 'em, crashin' out so
werry near;

And the Maxims got us sideways, and the bullets
faster flew,
And I copped one on me flipper, and says I:
"That's number two."

I was pleased it was the left one, for I 'ad me bombs,
ye see,
And 'twas 'ard if they'd be wasted like, and all along
o' me.
And I'd lost me 'at and rifle—but I told you that
before,
So I packed me mit inside me coat and "carried
on" once more.
But the rumpus it was wicked, and the men were
scarcer yet,
And I felt me ginger goin', but me jaws I kind
o' set,
And we passed the Boche first trenches, which was
'eapin' 'igh with dead,
And we started for their second, which was fifty
feet ahead;
When something like a 'ammer smashed me savage
on the knee,
And down I came all muck and blood: Says I:
"That's number three."

So there I lay all 'elpless like, and bloody sick at
that,
And worryin' like anythink, because I'd lost me 'at;

And thinkin' of me missis, and the partin' words she said:
"If you gets killed, write quick, ol' man, and tell me as you're dead."
And lookin' at me bunch o' bombs—that was the 'ardest blow,
To think I'd never 'ave the chance to 'url them at the foe.
And there was all our boys in front, a-fightin' there like mad,
And me as could 'ave 'elped 'em wiv the lovely bombs I 'ad.
And so I cussed and cussed, and then I struggled back again,
Into that bit of battered trench, packed solid with its slain.

Now as I lay a-lyin' there and blastin' of me lot,
And wishin' I could just dispose of all them bombs I'd got,
I sees within the doorway of a shy, retirin' dug-out
Six Boches all a-grinnin', and their Captain stuck 'is mug out;
And they 'ad a nice machine gun, and I twigged what they was at;
And they fixed it on a tripod, and I watched 'em like a cat;
And they got it in position, and they seemed so werry glad,
Like they'd got us in a death-trap, which, condemn their souls! they 'ad.

For there our boys was fightin' fifty yards in front, and 'ere
This lousy bunch of Boches they 'ad got us in the rear.

Oh it set me blood a-boilin', and I quite forgot me pain,
So I started crawlin', crawlin' over all them mounds of slain;
And them barstards was so busy-like they 'ad no eyes for me,
And me bleedin' leg was draggin', but me right arm it was free. . . .
And now they 'ave it all in shape, and swingin' sweet and clear;
And now they're all excited like, but—I am drawin' near;
And now they 'ave it loaded up, and now they're takin' aim. . . .
Rat-tat-tat-tat! Oh here, says I, is where I join the game.
And my right arm it goes swingin', and a bomb it goes a-slingin',
And that "typewriter" goes wingin' in a thunderbolt of flame.

Then these Boches, wot was left of 'em, they tumbled down their 'ole,
And up I climbed a mound of dead, and down on them I stole.

And oh that blessed moment when I heard their
frightened yell,
And I laughed down in that dug-out, ere I bombed
their souls to hell.
And now I'm in the hospital, surprised that I'm
alive;
We started out a thousand men, we came back
thirty-five.
And I'm minus of a trotter, but I'm most amazin'
gay,
For me bombs they wasn't wasted, though, you
might say, "thrown away."

THE WHISTLE OF SANDY McGRAW

You may talk o' your lutes and your dulcimers fine,
Your harps and your tabors and cymbals and a',
But here in the trenches jist gie me for mine
The wee penny whistle o' Sandy McGraw.
Oh it's: "Sandy, ma lad, will you lilt us a tune?"
And Sandy is willin' and trillin' like mad;
Sae silvery sweet that we a' throng aroun',
And some o' it's gay, but the maist o' it's sad.
Jist the wee simple airs that sink intae your hert,
And grup ye wi' love and wi' longin' for hame;
And ye glour like an owl till you're feelin' the stert
O' a tear, and you blink wi' a feelin' o' shame.
For his song's o' the heather, and here in the dirt
You listen and dream o' a land that's sae braw,
And he mak's you forget a' the harm and the hurt,
For he pipes like a laverock, does Sandy McGraw.

* * * * *

At Eepers I mind me when rank upon rank
We rose from the trenches and swept like the gale,
Till the rapid-fire guns got us fell on the flank
And the murderin' bullets came swishin' like hail:

Till a' that were left o' us faltered and broke;
Till it seemed for a moment a panicky rout,
When shrill through the fume and the flash and the smoke
The wee valiant voice o' a whistle piped out,
The Campbells are Comin': then into the fray
We bounded wi' bayonets reekin' and raw,
And oh we fair revelled in glory that day,
Jist thanks to the whistle o' Sandy McGraw.

* * * * *

At Loose, it wis after a sconnersome fecht,
On the field o' the slain I wis crawlin' aboot;
And the rockets were burnin' red holes in the nicht,
And the guns they were veciously thunderin' oot.
When sudden I heard a bit sound like a sigh,
And there in a crump-hole a kiltie I saw:
"Whit ails ye, ma lad? Are ye woundit?" says I.
"I've lost ma wee whustle," says Sandy McGraw.
"'Twas oot by yon bing where we pressed the attack,
It drapped frae ma pooch, and between noo and dawn
There isna much time, so I'm jist crawlin' back. . . ."
"Ye're daft, man!" I telt him, but Sandy wis gone.
Weel, I waited a wee, then I crawled oot masel,

And the big stuff wis gorin' and roarin' around,
And I seemed tae be under the oxter o' hell,
And Creation wis crackin' tae bits by the sound.
And I says in ma mind: "Gang ye back, ye auld fule!"
When I thrilled tae a note that wis saucy and sma';
And there in a crater, collected and cool,
Wi' his wee penny whistle, wis Sandy McGraw.
Ay, there he wis playin' as gleg as could be,
And listenin' hard wis a spectacled Boche;
Then Sandy turned roon' and he noddit tae me,
And he says: "Dinna blab on me, Sergeant McTosh.
The auld chap is deein'. He likes me tae play.
It's makin' him happy. Jist see his een shine!"
And thrillin' and sweet in the hert o' the fray
Wee Sandy wis playin' *The Watch on the Rhine.*

* * * * *

The last scene o' a'—'twas the day that we took
That bit o' black ruin they ca' Labbiesell.
It seemed the hale hillside jist shivered and shook,
And the red skies were roarin' and spewin' oot shell.
And the Sergeants were cursin' tae keep us in hand,
And hard on the leash we were strainin' like dugs,
When upward we shot at the word o' command,
And the bullets were dingin' their songs in oor lugs.

And onward we swept wi' a yell and a cheer,
And a' wis destruction, confusion and din,
And we knew that the trench o' the Boches wis near,
And it seemed jist the safest bit hole tae be in.
So we a' tumbled doon, and the Boches were there,
And they held up their hands, and they yelled:
"Kamarad!"
And I merched aff wi' ten, wi' their palms in the air,
And my! I wis prood-like, and my! I wis glad.
And I thocht: if ma lassie could see me jist then....
When sudden I sobered at somethin' I saw,
And I stopped and I stared, and I halted ma men,
For there on a stretcher wis Sandy McGraw.

Weel, he looks in ma face, jist as game as ye please:
"Ye ken hoo I hate tae be workin'," says he;
"But noo I can play in the street for bawbees,
Wi' baith o' ma legs taken aff at the knee."
And though I could see he wis rackit wi' pain,
He reached for his whistle and stertit tae play,
And quaverin' sweet wis the pensive refrain:
The floors o' the forest are a' wede away.
Then sudden he stoppit: "Man, wis it no grand
Hoo we took a' them trenches? . . . He shakit his heid. . . .
"I'll—no—play—nae—mair——" feebly doon frae his hand
Slipped the wee penny whistle and . . . *Sandy wis deid.*

* * * * *

And so ye may talk o' your Steinways and
Strads,
Yer wunnerfu' organs and brasses sae braw;
But oot in the trenches jist gie me, ma lads,
Yon wee penny whistle o' Sandy McGraw.

THE STRETCHER-BEARER

My stretcher is one scarlet stain,
And as I tries to scrape it clean,
I tell you wot—I'm sick with pain
For all I've 'eard, for all I've seen;
Around me is the 'ellish night,
And as the war's red rim I trace,
I wonder if in 'Eaven's height
Our God don't turn away 'Is Face.

I don't care 'ose the Crime may be;
I 'olds no brief for kin or clan;
I 'ymns no 'ate: I only see
As man destroys his brother man;
I waves no flag: I only know,
As 'ere beside the dead I wait,
A million 'earts is weighed with woe,
A million 'omes is desolate.

In drippin' darkness, far and near,
All night I've sought them woeful ones.
Dawn shudders up and still I 'ear
The crimson chorus of the guns.
Look, like a ball of blood the sun
'Angs o'er the scene of wrath and wrong. . . .
"Quick! Stretcher-bearers on the run!"
O Prince of Peace! 'Ow long, 'ow long?

WOUNDED

Is it not strange? A year ago to-day,
With scarce a thought beyond the humdrum round,
I did my decent job and earned my pay;
Was averagely happy, I'll be bound.
Ay, in my little groove I was content,
Seeing my life run smoothly to the end,
With prosy days in stolid labour spent,
And jolly nights, a pipe, a glass, a friend.
In God's good time a hearth fire's cosy gleam,
A wife and kids, and all a fellow needs;
When presto! like a bubble goes my dream:
I leap upon the Stage of Splendid Deeds.
I yell with rage; I wallow deep in gore:
I, that was clerk in a drysalter's store.

Stranger than any book I've ever read.
Here on the reeking battlefield I lie,
Under the stars, propped up with smeary dead,
Like too, if no one takes me in, to die.
Hit on the arms, legs, liver, lungs and gall;
Damn glad there's nothing more of me to hit;
But calm, and feeling never pain at all,
And full of wonder at the turn of it.

For of the dead around me three are mine,
Three foemen vanquished in the whirl of fight;
So if I die I have no right to whine,
I feel I've done my little bit all right.
I don't know how—but there the beggars are,
As dead as herrings pickled in a jar.

And here am I, worse wounded than I thought;
For in the fight a bullet bee-like stings;
You never heed; the air is metal-hot,
And all alive with little flicking wings.
But on you charge. You see the fellows fall;
Your pal was by your side, fair fighting-mad;
You turn to him, and lo! no pal at all;
You wonder vaguely if he's copped it bad.
But on you charge. The heavens vomit death;
And vicious death is besoming the ground.
You're blind with sweat; you're dazed, and out of breath,
And though you yell, you cannot hear a sound.
But on you charge. Oh, War's a rousing game!
Around you smoky clouds like ogres tower;
The earth is rowelled deep with spurs of flame,
And on your helmet stones and ashes shower.
But on you charge. It's odd! You have no fear.
Machine-gun bullets whip and lash your path;
Red, yellow, black the smoky giants rear;
The shrapnel rips, the heavens roar in wrath.
But on you charge. Barbed wire all trampled down;

The ground all gored and rent as by a blast;
Grim heaps of grey where once were heaps of brown;
A ragged ditch—the Hun first line at last,
All smashed to hell. Their second right ahead,
So on you charge. There's nothing else to do.
More reeking holes, blood, barbed wire, gruesome dead
(Your puttee strap's undone—that worries you).
You glare around. You think you're all alone.
But no; your chums come surging left and right.
The nearest chap flops down without a groan,
His face still snarling with the rage of fight.
Ha! here's the second trench—just like the first,
Only a little more so, more "laid out";
More pounded, flame-corroded, death-accurst;
A pretty piece of work, beyond a doubt.
Now for the third, and there your job is done,
So on you charge. You never stop to think.
Your cursed puttee's trailing as you run;
You feel you'd sell your soul to have a drink.
The acrid air is full of cracking whips.
You wonder how it is you're going still.
You foam with rage. Oh, God! to be at grips
With someone you can rush and crush and kill.
Your sleeve is dripping blood; you're seeing red;
You're battle-mad; your turn is coming now.
See! there's the jagged barbed wire straight ahead,
And there's the trench—you'll get there anyhow.
Your puttee catches on a strand of wire,

And down you go; perhaps it saves your life,
For over sandbag rims you see 'em fire,
Crop-headed chaps, their eyes ablaze with strife.
You crawl, you cower; then once again you plunge
With all your comrades roaring at your heels.
Have at 'em, lads! You stab, you jab, you lunge;
A blaze of glory, then the red world reels.
A crash of triumph, then . . . you're faint a bit . . .
That cursed puttee! Now to fasten it. . . .

Well, that's the charge. And now I'm here alone.
I've built a little wall of Hun on Hun,
To shield me from the leaden bees that drone
(It saves me worry, and it hurts 'em none).
The only thing I'm wondering is when
Some stretcher-men will stroll along my way?
It isn't much that's left of me, but then
Where life is, hope is, so at least they say.
Well, if I'm spared I'll be the happy lad.
I tell you I won't envy any king.
I've stood the racket, and I'm proud and glad;
I've had my crowning hour. Oh, War's the thing!
It gives us common, working chaps our chance,
A taste of glory, chivalry, romance.

Ay, War, they say, is hell; it's heaven, too.
It lets a man discover what he's worth.
It takes his measure, shows what he can do,
Gives him a joy like nothing else on earth.

It fans in him a flame that otherwise
Would flicker out, these drab, discordant days;
It teaches him in pain and sacrifice
Faith, fortitude, grim courage past all praise.
Yes, War is good. So here beside my slain,
A happy wreck, I wait amid the din;
For even if I perish mine's the gain. . . .
Hi there, you fellows! *Won't* you take me in?
Give me a fag to smoke upon the way. . . .
We've taken La Boiselle! The hell, you say!
Well, that would make a corpse sit up and grin. . . .
Lead on! I'll live to fight another day.

FAITH

Since all that is was ever bound to be;
Since grim, eternal laws our Being bind;
And both the riddle and the answer find,
And both the carnage and the calm decree;
Since plain within the Book of Destiny
Is written all the journey of mankind
Inexorably to the end; since blind
And mortal puppets playing parts are we:

Then let's have faith; good cometh out of ill;
The power that shaped the strife shall end the strife;
Then let's bow down before the Unknown Will;
Fight on, believing all is well with life;
Seeing within the worst of War's red rage
The gleam, the glory of the Golden Age.

THE COWARD

'Ave you seen Bill's mug in the Noos to-day?
'E's gyned the Victoriar Cross, they say:
Little Bill wot would grizzle and run away,
If you 'it 'im a swipe on the jawr.
'E's slaughtered the Kaiser's men in tons;
'E's captured one of their quick-fire guns,
And 'e 'adn't no practice in killin' 'Uns
Afore 'e went off to the war.

Little Bill wot I nussed in 'is by-by clothes;
Little Bill wot told me 'is childish woes;
'Ow often I've tidied 'is pore little nose
Wiv the 'em of me pinnyfore.
And now all the papers 'is praises ring,
And 'e's been and 'e's shaken the 'and of the King,
And I sawr 'im to-day in the ward, pore thing,
Where they're patching 'im up once more.

And 'e says: "Wot d'ye think of it, Lizer Ann?"
And I says: "Well, I can't make it out, old man;
You'd 'ook it as soon as a scrap began,
When you was a bit of a kid."

And 'e whispers: "'Ere, on the quiet, Liz,
They're makin' too much of the 'ole damn biz,
And the papers is printin' me ugly phiz,
But . . . I'm 'anged if I know wot I did.

"Oh, the Captain comes and 'e says: 'Look 'ere!
They're far too quiet out there: it's queer.
They're up to somethin'—'oo'll volunteer
To crawl in the dark and see?'
Then I felt me 'eart like a 'ammer go,
And up jumps a chap and 'e says: 'Right O!'
But I chips in straight, and I says, 'Oh no!
'E's a missis and kids—take me.'

"And the next I knew I was sneakin' out,
And the oozy corpses was all about,
And I felt so scared I wanted to shout,
And my skin fair prickled wiv fear;
And I sez: 'You coward! You 'ad no right
To take on the job of a man this night.'
Yet still I kept creepin' till (Ortid sight!)
The trench of the 'Uns was near.

"It was all so dark, it was all so still;
Yet somethin' pushed me against me will;
'Ow I wanted to turn! Yet I crawled until
I was seein' a dim light shine.

Then thinks I: 'I'll just go a little bit,
And see wot the doose I can make of it,'
And it seemed to come from the mouth of a pit:
'Christmas!' sez I, 'a *mine*.'

"Then 'ere's the part wot I can't explain:
I wanted to make for 'ome again,
But somethin' was blazin' inside me brain,
So I crawled to the trench instead;
Then I saw the bullet 'ead of a 'Un,
And 'e stood by a rapid-firer gun,
And I lifted a rock and I 'it 'im one,
And 'e dropped like a chunk o' lead.

"Then all the 'Uns that was underground
Comes up with a rush and on with a bound,
And I swings that giddy old Maxim round
And belts 'em solid and square.
You see I was off me chump wiv fear:
'If I'm sellin' me life,' sez I, 'it's dear.'
And the trench was narrow and they was near,
So I peppered the brutes for fair.

"So I 'eld 'em back and I yelled with fright,
And the boys attacked and we 'ad a fight,
And we 'captured a section o' trench' that night
Which we didn't expect to get;

And they found me there with me Maxim gun,
And I'd laid out a score if I'd laid out one,
And I fainted away when the thing was done,
    And I 'aven't got over it yet."

So that's the 'istory Bill told me.
Of course it's all on the strict Q.T.;
It wouldn't do to get out, you see,
    As 'e hacted against 'is will.
But 'e's convalescin' wiv all 'is might,
And 'e 'opes to be fit for another fight—
Say! Ain't 'e a bit of the real all right?
    Wot's the matter with Bill!

MISSIS MORIARTY'S BOY

Missis Moriarty called last week, and says she to me, says she:
"Sure the heart of me's broken entirely now—it's the fortunate woman you are;
You've still got your Dinnis to cheer up your home, but me Patsy boy where is he?
Lyin' alone, cold as a stone, kilt in the weariful wahr.
Oh, I'm seein' him now as I looked on him last, wid his hair all curly and bright,
And the wonderful, tenderful heart he had, and his eyes as he wint away,
Shinin' and lookin' down on me from the pride of his proper height:
Sure I'll remember me boy like that if I live to me dyin' day."

And just as she spoke them very same words me Dinnis came in at the door,
Came in from McGonigle's ould shebeen, came in from drinkin' his pay;

And Missis Moriarty looked at him, and she didn't
say anny more,
But she wrapped her head in her ould black shawl,
and she quietly wint away.
And what was I thinkin', I ask ye now, as I put me
Dinnis to bed,
Wid him ravin' and cursin' one half o' the night, as
cold by his side I sat;
Was I thinkin' the poor ould woman she was, wid
her Patsy slaughtered and dead?
Was I weepin' for Missis Moriarty? I'm not so
sure about that.

Missis Moriarty goes about wid a shinin' look on
her face;
Wid her grey hair under her ould black shawl, and
the eyes of her mother-mild;
Some say she's a little bit off her head; but anny-
way it's the case
Her timper's so swate that you nivver would tell
she'd be losin' her only child.
And I think, as I wait up ivery night for me Dinnis
to come home blind,
And I'm hearin' his stumblin' foot on the stair along
about half-past three:
Sure there's many a way of breakin' a heart, and I
haven't made up me mind—
Would I be Missis Moriarty, or Missis Moriarty
me?

MY FOE

A Belgian Priest-Soldier Speaks:

Gurr! you *cochon!* Stand and fight!
Show your mettle! Snarl and bite!
Spawn of an accursed race,
Turn and meet me face to face!
Here amid the wreck and rout
Let us grip and have it out!
Here where ruins rock and reel
Let us settle, steel to steel!
Look! Our houses, how they spit
Sparks from brands your friends have lit.
See! Our gutters running red,
Bright with blood your friends have shed.
Hark! Amid your drunken brawl
How our maidens shriek and call.
Why have *you* come here alone,
To this hearth's blood-spattered stone?
Come to ravish, come to loot,
Come to play the ghoulish brute.

Ah, indeed! We well are met,
Bayonet to bayonet.
God! I never killed a man:
Now I'll do the best I can.
Rip you to the evil heart,
Laugh to see the life-blood start.
Bah! you swine! I hate you so.
Show you mercy? No! . . . and no! . . .

There! I've done it. See! he lies
Death a-staring from his eyes;
Glazing eyeballs, panting breath,
How it's horrible, is Death!
Plucking at his bloody lips
With his trembling finger-tips;
Choking in a dreadful way
As if he would something say
In that uncouth tongue of his. . . .
Oh, how horrible Death is!

How I wish that he would die!
So unnerved, unmanned am I.
See! His twitching face is white!
See! His bubbling blood is bright.
Why do I not shout with glee?
What strange spell is over me?

There he lies; the fight was fair;
Let me toss my cap in air.
Why am I so silent? Why
Do I pray for him to die?
Where is all my vengeful joy?
Ugh! *My foe is but a boy.*

I'd a brother of his age
Perished in the war's red rage;
Perished in the Ypres hell:
Oh, I loved my brother well.
And though I be hard and grim,
How it makes me think of him!
He had just such flaxen hair
As the lad that's lying there.
Just such frank blue eyes were his. . . .
God! How horrible war is!

I have reason to be gay:
There is one less foe to slay.
I have reason to be glad:
Yet—my foe is such a lad.
So I watch in dull amaze,
See his dying eyes a-glaze,
See his face grow glorified,
See his hands outstretched and wide

To that bit of ruined wall
Where the flames have ceased to crawl,
Where amid the crumbling bricks
Hangs *a blackened crucifix.*

Now, oh now I understand.
Quick I press it in his hand,
Close his feeble finger-tips,
Hold it to his faltering lips.
As I watch his welling blood
I would stem it if I could.
God of Pity, let him live!
God of Love, forgive, forgive.

* * * * *

His face looked strangely, as he died,
Like that of One they crucified.
And in the pocket of his coat
I found a letter; thus he wrote:
The things I've seen! Oh mother, dear,
I'm wondering can God be here?
To-night amid the drunken brawl
I saw a Cross hung on a wall;
I'll seek it out, and there alone
Perhaps I may atone, atone. . . .

Ah no! 'tis I who must atone.
No other saw but God alone;
Yet how can I forget the sight
Of that face so woeful white!

Dead I kissed him as he lay,
Knelt by him and tried to pray;
Left him lying there at rest,
Crucifix upon his breast.

Not for him the pity be.
Ye who pity, pity me,
Crawling now the ways I trod,
Blood-guilty in the sight of God.

MY JOB

I've got a little job on 'and, the time is drawin' nigh;
At seven by the Captain's watch I'm due to go and do it;
I wants to 'ave it nice and neat, and pleasin' to the eye,
And I 'opes the God of soldier men will see me safely through it.
Because, you see, it's somethin' I 'ave never done before;
And till you 'as experience noo stunts is always tryin';
The chances is I'll never 'ave to do it any more:
At seven by the Captain's watch my little job is . . . *dyin'*.

I've got a little note to write; I'd best begin it now
I ain't much good at writin' notes, but here goes:
"Dearest Mother,
I've been in many 'ot old "do's"; I've scraped through safe some'ow,
But now I'm on the very point of tacklin' another.

A little job of hand-grenades; they called for volunteers.
They picked me out; I'm proud of it; it seems a trifle dicky.
If anythin' should 'appen, well, there ain't no call for tears,
And so . . . I 'opes this finds you well.—Your werry lovin' Micky."

I've got a little score to settle wiv them swine out there.
I've 'ad so many of me pals done in it's quite upset me.
I've seen so much of bloody death I don't seem for to care,
If I can only even up, how soon the blighters get me.
I'm sorry for them perishers that corpses in a bed;
I only 'opes mine's short and sweet, no linger-longer-lyin';
I've made a mess of life, but now I'll try to make instead . . .
It's seven sharp. Good-bye, old pals! . . . *a decent job in dyin'*.

THE SONG OF THE PACIFIST

What do they matter, our headlong hates, when
we take the toll of our Dead?
Think ye our glory and gain will pay for the tor-
rent of blood we have shed?
By the cheers of our Victory will the heart of the
mother be comforted?

If by the Victory all we mean is a broken and
brooding foe;
Is the pomp and power of a glitt'ring hour, and
a truce for an age or so:
By the clay-cold hand on the broken blade we have
smitten a bootless blow!

If by the Triumph we only prove that the sword
we sheathe is bright;
That justice and truth and love endure; that free-
dom's throned on the height;
That the feebler folks shall be unafraid; that Might
shall never be Right;

If this be all: by the blood-drenched plains, by the
havoc of fire and fear,
By the rending roar of the War of Wars, by the
Dead so doubly dear. . . .
Then our Victory is a vast defeat, and it mocks us
as we cheer.

Victory! there can be but one, hallowed in every
land:
When by the graves of our common dead we who
were foemen stand;
And in the hush of our common grief hand is
tendered to hand.

Triumph! Yes, when out of the dust in the splen-
dour of their release
The spirits of those who fell go forth and they
hallow our hearts to peace,
And, brothers in pain, with world-wide voice, we
clamour that War shall cease.

Glory! Ay, when from blackest loss shall be born
most radiant gain;
When over the gory fields shall rise a star that
never shall wane:
Then, and then only, our Dead shall know that
they have not fall'n in vain.

When our children's children shall talk of War as
a madness that may not be;
When we thank our God for our grief to-day, and
blazon from sea to sea
In the name of the Dead the banner of Peace . . .
that will be Victory.

THE TWINS

THERE were two brothers, John and James,
And when the town went up in flames,
To save the house of James dashed John,
Then turned, and lo! his own was gone.

And when the great World War began,
To volunteer John promptly ran;
And while he learned live bombs to lob,
James stayed at home and—sneaked his job.

John came home with a missing limb;
That didn't seem to worry him;
But oh, it set his brain awhirl
To find that James had—sneaked his girl!

Time passed. John tried his grief to drown;
To-day James owns one-half the town;
His army contracts riches yield;
And John? Well, *search the Potter's Field.*

THE SONG OF THE SOLDIER-BORN

Give me the scorn of the stars and a peak defiant;
Wail of the pines and a wind with the shout of a giant;
Night and a trail unknown and a heart reliant.

Give me to live and love in the old, bold fashion;
A soldier's billet at night and a soldier's ration;
A heart that leaps to the fight with a soldier's passion.

For I hold as a simple faith there's no denying:
The trade of a soldier's the only trade worth plying;
The death of a soldier's the only death worth dying.

So let me go and leave your safety behind me;
Go to the spaces of hazard where nothing shall bind me;
Go till the word is War—and then you will find me.

Then you will call me and claim me because you will need me;
Cheer me and gird me and into the battle-wrath speed me. . . .
And when it's over, spurn me and no longer heed me.

For guile and a purse gold-greased are the arms you carry;
With deeds of paper you fight and with pens you parry;
You call on the hounds of the law your foes to harry.

You with your "Art for its own sake," posing and prinking;
You with your "Live and be merry," eating and drinking;
You with your "Peace at all hazard," from bright blood shrinking.

Fools! I will tell you now: though the red rain patters,
And a million of men go down, it's little it matters. . . .
There's the Flag upflung to the stars, though it streams in tatters.

There's a glory gold never can buy to yearn and
to cry for;
There's a hope that's as old as the sky to suffer and
sigh for;
There's a faith that out-dazzles the sun to martyr
and die for.

Ah no! it's my dream that War will never be ended;
That men will perish like men, and valour be
splendid;
That the Flag by the sword will be served, and
honour defended.

That the tale of my fights will never be ancient
story;
That though my eye may be dim and my beard be
hoary,
I'll die as a soldier dies on the Field of Glory.

*So give me a strong right arm for a wrong's swift
righting;*
Stave of a song on my lips as my sword is smiting;
Death in my boots maybe, but fighting, fighting.

AFTERNOON TEA

As I was saying . . . (No, thank you; I never take
cream with my tea;
Cows weren't allowed in the trenches—got out of
the habit, y'see.)
As I was saying, our Colonel leaped up like a
youngster of ten:
"Come on, lads!" he shouts, "and we'll show 'em."
And he sprang to the head of the men.
Then some bally thing seemed to trip him, and he
fell on his face with a slam. . . .
Oh, he died like a true British soldier, and the last
word he uttered was "Damn!"
And hang it! I loved the old fellow, and some-
thing just burst in my brain,
And I cared no more for the bullets than I would
for a shower of rain.
'Twas an awf'ly funny sensation (I say, this is jolly
nice tea);
I felt as if something had broken; by gad! I was
suddenly free.
Free for a glorified moment, beyond regulations
and laws,

Free just to wallow in slaughter, as the chap of the Stone Age was.
So on I went joyously nursing a Berserker rage of my own,
And though all my chaps were behind me, feeling most frightf'ly alone;
With the bullets and shells ding-donging, and the "krock" and the swish of the shrap;
And I found myself humming "Ben Bolt" . . .
(Will you pass me the sugar, old chap?
Two lumps, please). . . . What was I saying?
Oh yes, the jolly old dash;
We simply ripped through the barrage, and on with a roar and a crash.
My fellows—Old Nick couldn't stop 'em. On, on they went with a yell,
Till they tripped on the Boches' sand-bags—nothing much left to tell.
A trench so tattered and battered that even a rat couldn't live;
Some corpses tangled and mangled, wire you could pass through a sieve.
The jolly old guns had bilked us, cheated us out of our show,
And my fellows were simply yearning for a red mix-up with the foe.
So I shouted to them to follow, and on we went roaring again,
Battle-tuned and exultant, on in the leaden rain.

Then all at once a machine gun barks from a bit
of a bank,
And our Major roars in a fury: "We've got to
take it on flank."
He was running like fire to lead us, when down
like a stone he comes,
As full of "type-writer" bullets as a pudding is full
of plums.
So I took his job and we got 'em. . . . By gad!
we got 'em like rats;
Down in a deep shell crater we fought like Kil-
kenny cats.
'Twas pleasant just for a moment to be sheltered
and out of range,
With someone you *saw* to go for—it made an
agreeable change.
And the Boches that missed my bullets, my chaps
gave the bayonet jolt,
And all the time, I remember, I whistled and
hummed "Ben Bolt."

Well, that little job was over, so hell for leather
we ran,
On to the second line trenches—that's where the
fun began.
For though we had strafed 'em like fury, there still
were some Boches about,
And my fellows, teeth set and eyes glaring, like
terriers routed 'em out.

Then I stumbled on one of their dug-outs, and I shouted: "Is anyone there?"
And a voice, "Yes, one; but I'm wounded," came faint up the narrow stair;
And my man was descending before me, when sudden a cry! a shot!
(I say, this cake is delicious. You make it yourself, do you not?)
My man? Oh, they killed the poor devil; for if there was one there was ten;
So after I'd bombed 'em sufficient I went down at the head of my men;
And four tried to sneak from a bunk-hole, but we cornered the rotters all right;
I'd rather not go into details, 'twas messy, that bit of the fight.
But all of it's beastly messy; let's talk of pleasanter things:
The skirts that the girls are wearing, ridiculous fluffy things,
So short that they show. . . . Oh, hang it! Well, if I must, I must.
We cleaned out the second trench line, bomb and bayonet thrust;
And on we went to the third one, quite calloused to crumping by now;
And some of our fellows who'd passed us were making a deuce of a row;
And my chaps—well, I just couldn't hold 'em. (It's strange how it is with gore;

In some ways it's just like whisky: if you taste
it you must have more.)
Their eyes were like beacons of battle; by gad, sir!
they *couldn't* be calmed,
So I headed 'em bang for the bomb-belt, racing
like billy-be-damned.
Oh, it didn't take long to arrive there, those who
arrived at all;
The machine guns were certainly chronic, the
shindy enough to appal.
Oh yes, I omitted to tell you, I'd wounds on the
chest and the head,
And my shirt was torn to a gun-rag, and my face
blood-gummy and red.
I'm thinking I looked like a madman; I fancy I
felt one too,
Half naked and swinging a rifle. . . . God! what
a glorious "do."
As I sit here in old Piccadilly, sipping my afternoon
tea,
I see a blind, bullet-chipped devil, and it's hard to
believe that it's me;
I see a wild, war-damaged demon, smashing out
left and right,
And humming "Ben Bolt" rather loudly, and
hugely enjoying the fight.
And as for my men, may God bless 'em! I've loved
'em ever since then:
They fought like the shining angels; they're the
pick o' the land, my men.

And the trench was a reeking shambles, not a
Boche to be seen alive—
So I thought; but on rounding a traverse I came
on a covey of five;
And four of 'em threw up their flippers, but the
fifth chap, a sergeant, was game,
And though I'd a bomb and revolver he came at
me just the same.
A sporty thing that, I tell you; I just couldn't blow
him to hell,
So I swung to the point of his jaw-bone, and down
like a ninepin he fell.
And then when I'd brought him to reason, he
wasn't half bad, that Hun;
He bandaged my head and my short-rib as well as
the Doc could have done.
So back I went with my Boches, as gay as a
two-year-old colt,
And it suddenly struck me as rummy, I still was
a-humming "Ben Bolt."
And now, by Jove! how I've bored you. You've
just let me babble away;
Let's talk of the things that *matter*—your car or
the newest play. . . .

THE MOURNERS

I LOOK into the aching womb of night;
I look across the mist that masks the dead;
The moon is tired and gives but little light,
The stars have gone to bed.

The earth is sick and seems to breathe with pain;
A lost wind whimpers in a mangled tree;
I do not see the foul, corpse-cluttered plain,
The dead I do not see.

The slain I *would* not see . . . and so I lift
My eyes from out the shambles where they lie;
When lo! a million woman-faces drift
Like pale leaves through the sky.

The cheeks of some are channelled deep with tears;
But some are tearless, with wild eyes that stare
Into the shadow of the coming years
Of fathomless despair.

And some are young, and some are very old;
And some are rich, some poor beyond belief;
Yet all are strangely like, set in the mould
Of everlasting grief.

They fill the vast of Heaven, face on face;
And then I see one weeping with the rest,
Whose eyes beseech me for a moment's space. . . .
Oh, eyes I love the best!

Nay, I but dream. The sky is all forlorn,
And there's the plain of battle writhing red:
God pity them, the womenfolk who mourn!
How happy are the dead!

L'ENVOI

My job is done; my rhymes are ranked and ready,
My word-battalions marching verse by verse;
Here stanza-companies are none too steady;
There print-platoons are weak, but might be worse.
And as in marshalled order I review them,
My type-brigades, unfearful of the fray,
My eyes that seek their faults are seeing through them
Immortal visions of an epic day.

It seems I'm in a giant bowling-alley;
The hidden heavies round me crash and thud;
A spire snaps like a pipe-stem in the valley;
The rising sun is like a ball of blood.
Along the road the "fantassins" are pouring,
And some are gay as fire, and some steel-stern. . . .
Then back again I see the red tide pouring,
Along the reeking road from Hebuterne.

And once again I seek Hill Sixty-Seven,
The Hun lines grey and peaceful in my sight;
When suddenly the rosy air is riven—
A "coal-box" blots the "boyou" on my right.

Or else to evil Carnoy I am stealing,
Past sentinels who hail with bated breath;
Where not a cigarette spark's dim revealing
May hint our mission in that zone of death.

I see across the shrapnel-seeded meadows
The jagged rubble-heap of La Boiselle;
Blood-guilty Fricourt brooding in the shadows,
And Thiepval's château empty as a shell.
Down Albert's riven streets the moon is leering;
The Hanging Virgin takes its bitter ray;
And all the road from Hamel I am hearing
The silver rage of bugles over Bray.

Once more within the sky's deep sapphire hollow
I sight a swimming Taube, a fairy thing;
I watch the angry shell flame flash and follow
In feather puffs that flick a tilted wing;
And then it fades, with shrapnel mirror's flashing;
The flashes bloom to blossoms lily gold;
The batteries are rancorously crashing,
And life is just as full as it can hold.

Oh spacious days of glory and of grieving!
Oh sounding hours of lustre and of loss!
Let us be glad we lived you, still believing
The God who gave the cannon gave the Cross.

Let us be sure amid the seething passions,
The lusts of blood and hate our souls abhor,
The Power that Order out of Chaos fashions
Smites fiercest in the wrath-red forge of War. . . .
Have faith! Fight on! Amid the battle-hell
Love triumphs, Freedom beacons, all is well.

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